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Allegiances

RiverClan

Leader|
Sagestar - black tom with long white whiskers

Deputy|
Cloverheart - brown and white tabby tom with green eyes

Medicine Cat|
Thistleleaf - long-furred pale gray she-cat with a missing eye

Warriors|

Thornstep - dark brown tom with white paws

Eeltail - silver tom with dark black tabby stripes
Apprentice, Redpaw

Nightwhisker - black and white she-cat

Troutpelt - gray tabby tom

Blueheart - blue-gray she-cat with amber eyes
Apprentice, Sleetpaw

Brokenwing - dark gray tabby tom with a twisted forepaw

Mallowfang - pale brown tabby tom

Creekfall - golden she-cat with green eyes
Apprentice, Lakepaw

Voletail - short-tailed brown she-cat

Wolfsong - spiky-furred dark gray tom with a black stripe running along his back

Frostfoot - white she-cat

Hailclaw - white tom with gray patches

Apprentices|

Redpaw - dark ginger tabby tom, one white forepaw and one white back paw

Sleetpaw - pure white she-cat

Lakepaw - mottled gray tom

Queens|

Alliumspark - white she-cat with black speckles along her back, one blue eye and one green eye (mother of Wolfsong's kit: Rubblekit, foster mother of Otterkit and Pikekit)

Mistcloud - white and gray blue-point Siamese she-cat with blue eyes (mother of Brokenwing's kits: Quailkit and Eaglekit)

Lavenderpetal - silver-white she-cat with smokey-blue eyes (expecting Mallowfang's kits)

Kits|

Rubblekit - black, gray, and white patched tom-kit with yellow eyes

Otterkit - sleek dark brown she-kit with yellow-green eyes

Pikekit - skinny silver tom-kit with long whiskers and golden eyes

Quailkit - white and gray blue-point Siamese she-kit with blue eyes

Eaglekit - dark gray tabby tom-kit with amber-green eyes

Elders|

Heronstep - black tom

Foxstripe - russet tabby she-cat with yellow eyes

WindClan

Leader|
Rabbitstar - small white she-cat with a bobbed tail

Deputy|
Darkwhisker - black tabby tom

Medicine Cat|
Heatherpelt - pale brown tabby tom with blue eyes
Apprentice, Leafpaw

Warriors|

Grasspelt - brown she-cat with green eyes

Hareleap - large white tom
Apprentice, Turtlepaw

Sorrelwhisker - tortoiseshell and white she-cat

Sedgeclaw - dark brown tabby tom

Ambersky - ginger she-cat with blue eyes

Willowcreek - gray tabby she-cat

Firepelt - bright orange tom
Apprentice, Sweetpaw

Yarrowbranch - yellow tom

Fernheart - pale gray she-cat
Apprentice, Rockpaw

Runningfoot - swift rose-cream she-cat

Dustwing - gray tom with black tinges on his muzzle, tail, and back
Apprentice, Mousepaw

Apprentices|

Leafpaw - mottled brown she-cat

Turtlepaw - black she-cat with green eyes

Sweetpaw - black and white she-cat

Rockpaw - silver tom

Mousepaw - small brown she-cat

Queens|

Owlwhisker - black-speckled brown she-cat with yellow eyes (mother of Briarkit)

Kits|

Briarkit - delicate light brown she-kit with bright yellow eyes

Elders|

Plumtail - dappled gray she-cat

ThunderClan

Leader|
Beechstar - creamy-brown tabby tom

Deputy|
Frogleap - gray tom with green eyes

Medicine Cat|
Greenheart - white tom with green eyes

ShadowClan

Leader|
Ashstar - silver tabby she-cat

Deputy|
Specklenose - dappled golden she-cat

Medicine Cat|
Juniperstripe - red-brown tabby tom

Prologue

The moon was the only thing lighting the path of a pitch-black tom as he wove his way off his territory. Leaving RiverClan behind this late at night made his pelt prickle uncomfortably.

Sagestar had just become leader. Aspenstar, the former leader, had died just a moon earlier. He felt lost but at least he had his deputy, Cloverheart, to support him. RiverClan would be safe in his paws. Sagestar kept telling himself that but he still had his doubts. He'd picked Cloverheart because he was older and way more experienced. But the thoughts of Cloverheart taking care of RiverClan did not ease the other burden laying heavily on the black tom's shoulders.

He was on his way to meet the leader of WindClan, Rabbitstar. She was a very intimidating and fierce she-cat, despite being so small. She'd been leader for a very long time, ever since Sagestar was an apprentice. He remembered arriving at his first Gathering and keeping as far from her as possible.

Aspenstar wouldn't be afraid, Sagestar thought shamefully. He felt like a stupid kit worrying about this meeting. What did Rabbitstar want to say to him that couldn't wait for the next full moon?

He halted and his breath immediately hitched in his throat as he saw her. She'd told him to meet her at Fourtrees, and he was there now. She was already settled there expectantly, her pure white fur shining silver under the moonlight. She looked up as she scented him.

"Greetings, Sagestar," she meowed to him respectfully as he shakily approached her. Her amber gaze flashed as she looked into his face.

"G-Greetings, Rabbitstar," Sagestar mewed back. He shook himself to hide his trembling and sat down next to her, making sure their pelts didn't brush in the process. He draped his tail over his front paws.

"I expect you're aware what I want to talk about is very important," Rabbitstar began.

Sagestar twitched his ears. "Yes, I'm sure it is," he replied. "Why

else would you have told me to meet you alone?"

Rabbitstar rose to her paws and began pacing back and forth in front of him. "I know you're a new leader, Sagestar," the white she-cat meowed. "You're very young. Only had one apprentice so far, am I correct?" She halted and stared at him quizzically.

Sagestar gulped. "Yes, that is correct," he said.

"So you don't have a lot of experience," Rabbitstar went on, proceeding to pace in front of him. "But I can't let this slide, just because you're new."

Confusion immediately filled the RiverClan leader and he frowned. "I believe I don't know what you're talking about," he murmured.

Rabbitstar halted again and met him with her ferocious stare. "Oh really?" she inquired suspiciously. She shook her head. "Don't lie to me. You young cats may think you're more clever than us elders just because your body is fresher, but you forget how wise and experienced an old cat is. I've been leader for seasons and seasons, Sagestar. This isn't the first time I've dealt with something like this. But this is the *first time* I've seen it this bad."

Sagestar scrambled to his paws and stared at Rabbitstar, some of his intimidation of her melting. "Before you so falsely accuse me, please explain *what* is going on!"

Rabbitstar hissed, arching her back. "That was really sick of you! Killing Icepaw and throwing him back over our border! You have no idea the grief his mother and siblings are going through!"

Sagestar bared his teeth as shock rippled through him. "I didn't kill Icepaw! What are you talking about?"

Rabbitstar flicked her bobbed tail angrily. "Don't lie to me!" she snarled. She unsheathed her claws. "This means war, Sagestar. You don't get to mess with WindClan and devise whatever plan your young mind has invented. You may be younger and stronger than me, but I'm smarter and more cunning."

Sagestar dug his claws into the grass. "You're delusional, that's what you are!" he retaliated. He couldn't believe this. He'd had no idea about Icepaw's death. "How do you know it was us?"

Rabbitstar stepped towards him. "There was RiverClan scent *all over* his body," she growled.

"Oh yeah?" Sagestar hissed back. "Then which cat was it?"

"If you think I've memorized each of your cats' scents individually, then *you're* the delusional one!" Rabbitstar yowled.

"But it was *definitely* a tom!"

Sagestar took a pace closer to her until their muzzles were only a claw-length apart, their tails lashing behind both of them. "Well, I'm not the only tom in RiverClan," he muttered darkly. "I did *not* kill Icepaw!"

"It was one of your warriors!" Rabbitstar spat.

"Then I'll find out who and they'll receive the appropriate consequences," Sagestar told her. "There is no need to declare war on RiverClan over a dead cat!"

"A dead cat that is only dead because RiverClan murdered him," the small she-cat hissed. "I have every right to declare war on your pathetic excuse for a Clan!"

"StarClan would not want this," Sagestar meowed, feeling desperate and afraid at this point. His heart was pounding so fast he was certain it would explode from his chest.

Rabbitstar flashed her gaze towards the night sky. "Really?" she mewed. "Well, I don't see them covering the moon."

Sagestar followed her gaze to see the half-moon up above looking completely untouched by any surrounding clouds. He looked to the WindClan leader again.

"So I guess StarClan blames RiverClan as much as I do," Rabbitstar told him darkly. "Be prepared, Sagestar. We will get our revenge, one way or another."

With that, she whirled around and stalked out of the clearing, leaving Sagestar alone, his whole body trembling with shock.

Chapter 1

Quailkit was awoken by the bright greenleaf sun shining in through the nursery entrance. She slowly blinked open her eyes and looked around at the den. Her brother Eaglekit was curled up beside her at their mother, Mistcloud's, flank. She was the first one awake. Again.

She had been an early riser since she started walking. But it was frustrating to her. She wanted to wake up with the rest of the kits so they could go play! The nursery had gotten a lot more empty ever since Voletail and her three kits, Redkit, Lakekit, and Sleetkit had moved out.

The three kits had just become apprentices a moon ago and Quailkit couldn't help but feel jealous. She was only four moons old. She wouldn't *be* an apprentice for another two moons.

The little Siamese kit rose to her paws, shaking scraps of moss from her pelt and arching her back into a stretch. She hopped out of the nest she shared with her mother and brother and padded towards the nursery entrance. She glanced over at the sleeping form of Lavenderpetal who was so close to kitting she looked as if she might explode.

To Quailkit's right, she spotted Alliumspark curled up asleep with her three kits, Rubblekit, Otterkit, and Pikekit and felt a flash of excitement. There were no other cats in RiverClan she was closer with than Rubblekit and Otterkit! They were her best friends. They spent everyday together playing and talking about what they'll do when they all finally become warriors.

Otterkit and Pikekit were not the real kits of Alliumspark and Wolfsong, however. Eeltail was their father but their mother had been a WindClan she-cat named Owlwhisker. They'd had three kits and made a deal that Eeltail could keep two and Owlwhisker could keep one. Eeltail was not a kind or amiable tom at all. Otterkit kept as far from him as possible, as he was quite selfish and proud. Quailkit couldn't blame her friend. If *her* father was like that, too, she'd want nothing to do with him.

So Eeltail had entrusted his two kits with Alliumspark since her other kits except Rubblekit had all died at birth. The queen had

been very devastated but having Otterkit and Pikekit to care for had helped her tremendously.

As Quailkit was watching Alliumspark, she saw movement in the nest and Rubblekit perked up his head. The patched tom-kit's yellow gaze immediately landed on Quailkit and he smiled. He scrambled up from the nest and scampered over to her.

"Do you wanna watch the patrols being sorted?" Rubblekit asked. For some reason, Rubblekit enjoyed watching Cloverheart boss the warriors of RiverClan around.

Quailkit figured there was nothing else to do, though. "I-I guess," she mewed. "But shouldn't we wake Otterkit first? She'll *kill* us if she finds out we left the nursery without her!"

Rubblekit nodded. "Yeah, that's a good idea," he whispered back. He crept back towards his nest and poked the dark brown form of Otterkit with his paw.

The she-kit lifted her head, her yellow-green eyes bleary with sleep. She looked up at Rubblekit questioningly. "I was trying to sleep!" she growled. She stretched her jaws into a massive yawn.

"We were gonna go watch Cloverheart sort patrols!" Rubblekit squeaked.

Otterkit rose to her paws and crept past Pikekit, hopping out of the nest. She shook out her sleep-ruffled pelt and padded towards the den entrance. She looked a little more energetic and excited now that she knew why her foster brother had awoken her.

Quailkit dashed out of the nursery, not waiting for her friends. She was immediately greeted by the bright morning sun rising over the RiverClan camp. The air was warm and the trees and grass glowed golden under the sun's rays. In the distance, Quailkit could hear the familiar sound of the river trickling at the border with ThunderClan.

"Wait up!" Rubblekit mewled after Quailkit. Him and Otterkit came into the open, standing at Quailkit's side.

Cloverheart was seated in the middle of camp, a few warriors surrounding him.

"It looks like we missed the dawn patrol," Otterkit murmured in disappointment.

"What are you kits doing up this early?"

The three of them spun around to see who had spoken to them. Quailkit was expecting to meet the gaze of an angry warrior but instead, she saw the familiar dark ginger tabby pelt of Redpaw. He

was smiling at them.

"You're still a kit, too!" Otterkit told him, her fur spiking.

"But I'm an apprentice now," Redpaw mewed. "Anyways, do your mothers know you're out here?"

Before they could answer, a yowl sounded across camp. "Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey, gather here for a Clan meeting!"

Rubblekit gaped in excitement. "A Clan meeting!"

Suddenly, warriors began streaming across camp to settle in front of Sagestar, the RiverClan leader. The black tom was looking a little worried as he waited for his cats to assemble. Quailkit wondered what was wrong.

The entrance to the nursery rustled and Alliumspark poked her head out. Her mismatched gaze flashed with relief when she caught sight of Otterkit and Rubblekit. "There you two are!" she mewed. She padded over to them and Pikekit followed her close behind.

"Can we watch the meeting?" Rubblekit asked.

Mistcloud and Eaglekit exited close after Alliumspark. "Stop leaving the den before the rest of us are awake, Quailkit!" the Siamese queen snapped.

Quailkit bent her head. "Sorry..." she muttered.

Lavenderpetal was the last to leave the nursery. She wobbled over to the meeting, her swollen belly making it hard for her to walk.

Mistcloud seated herself next to Eaglekit and Quailkit, tucking her tail over her forepaws and watching Sagestar expectantly.

Quailkit glanced over at her brother. She could see sleepiness in his gaze but he looked excited to be watching a Clan meeting nonetheless.

Finally, all of RiverClan was settled in front of the leader.

"Last night, Rabbitstar and I met at Fourtrees," Sagestar began.

Quailkit felt excitement prickle at her paws. She remembered hearing about this meeting Rabbitstar, the WindClan leader, had planned with Sagestar. She had been interested to hear what happened. Information like this didn't usually meet the ears of a kit.

Anxiety flashed in Sagestar's gaze as he went on. "A WindClan apprentice known as Icepaw has been murdered recently," he meowed. "And Rabbitstar blames RiverClan for his death."

Shocked and confused murmurs rippled throughout the cats. Quailkit pricked her ears.

"She has declared war on RiverClan in revenge for Icepaw's death," Sagestar told them. The anxiety was more pronounced in his eyes now.

"She can't do that!" Nightwhisker yowled in protest.

"Does she have any proof it was us?" Hailclaw asked.

Many cats began yowling out their questions and comments and raising a whole bunch of noise within the camp. Sagestar lifted his long tail for silence. Everyone became quiet almost immediately.

"Rabbitstar has been WindClan's leader for a very long time," Sagestar said. "I'm afraid it's starting to take a toll on her in her old age. She claims she could smell RiverClan scent all over Icepaw's pelt. She even told me it was a tom." He paused. "But if I find out Rabbitstar was right and a RiverClan tom killed Icepaw, just know, your punishments could be as severe as exile. So I suggest you step forward. If anyone has any information on Icepaw's death, please come to me. Meeting dismissed." He flicked his tail and jumped down from the large rock.

The Clan split up and immediately began talking rapidly to each other, discussing what would happen next.

Quailkit padded over to Rubblekit and Otterkit. "We're going to war with RiverClan!" she exclaimed.

"That is nothing to be excited about," Mistcloud said sternly.

"I'm not excited!" Quailkit lied. This was going to be amazing! She would *finally* be able to fight like a warrior for her Clan!

"Go play, kits," Alliumspark said. "Mistcloud and I wish to talk in private."

Quailkit, Rubblekit, Otterkit, Pikekit, and Eaglekit all padded off.

"What game should we play?" Pikekit asked curiously.

"I want to play that fox game!" Eaglekit mewed. "Quailkit, you be the fox, and we'll be the RiverClan warriors!"

"Why do *I* have to be the fox?" Quailkit asked.

"Because you're good at being the fox!" Eaglekit told her.

"We play this game too much," Quailkit mumbled. "I want to talk about the war with WindClan!"

Otterkit blinked at her. "What is there to talk about? They'd never let us be involved," she said.

"We'll all be apprentices in two moons," Quailkit reminded them. "The war will still be going on then, I'm sure. But until that happens, we should do something!"

"Like what?" Pikekit asked.

"We should go spy on the WindClan camp and figure out what their plans are," Quailkit muttered. "The whole Clan would thank us!"

Eaglekit scoffed. "No, we'd just get in trouble for leaving camp," he meowed.

"Fine!" Quailkit hissed. "Be a scaredy-mouse! Who will come with me?"

"I will!" Rubblekit piped up.

Otterkit smirked. "You know I'm always up for an adventure!" Sadness suddenly crept into the dark brown kit's gaze. "And maybe Owlwhisker will want to see me..."

Pikekit glanced at his sister. "I don't want to go with you but..." He trailed off for a few heartbeats, "...if you see Owlwhisker or Briarkit, tell them I said hi."

Otterkit nodded at the silver tom-kit. "So when do we leave?" she asked Quailkit.

"Tonight!" Quailkit said.

"Have fun getting in trouble, I guess," Eaglekit growled. He turned and stalked off.

Quailkit stared after her littermate with a narrowed gaze. He was so boring sometimes. She was going to save RiverClan. Then Eaglekit would be sorry he hadn't come!

Chapter 2

Quailkit couldn't stop fidgeting in her nest as she waited for every last warrior to go to sleep. Mistcloud always made her and Eaglekit go back to the nursery for the night a little before dusk. She could see a few cats gathered in the clearing, chattering happily as they shared prey.

Eaglekit had already fallen asleep, his little gray paw tucked over his muzzle. Quailkit could feel the gentle breathing of Mistcloud beside her. She knew how much trouble she'd be in if her mother knew what she was about to do.

But she'll thank me later, Quailkit thought with determination. *They all will. I'll be the most respected warrior in RiverClan!*

The Siamese kit darted her eyes across the nursery to see Rubblekit also watching the entrance. He seemed just as excited for this as she did. She could see the dark brown pelt of Otterkit next to him but her head was hidden by Alliumspark's tail.

Eventually, night rolled around. Quailkit slowly lifted herself to her paws, careful not to wake Eaglekit or Mistcloud. She crept over to Rubblekit and Otterkit who both perked up as soon as they saw her.

"Let's go," Quailkit whispered.

Otterkit and Rubblekit carefully snuck past their mother and all three kits headed towards the den entrance. They stepped out into the clearing. And Quailkit's heart immediately sank.

Thick, dark clouds were swirling across the night sky, blocking out the moon and stars. She parted her maw and drew in the scents around her. To her disappointment, there was a strong tang of rain in the air.

Otterkit and Rubblekit seemed to notice, too. Both of them were flexing their paws in frustration.

Quailkit suddenly felt a spark of determination. "Rain has never stopped a real warrior," she murmured to them. "I've heard stories from Heronstep and Foxstripe that they fought in raging thunderstorms in their days! We can do this!"

"Okay, but if I get a soaked pelt, it's your fault," Otterkit grumbled, but her eyes were shining with amusement.

Quailkit snorted. "You're a RiverClan cat," she reminded her. "You're *supposed* to be okay with getting a wet pelt."

Otterkit shook her head. "I'm half WindClan," she mewed. "I don't like water that much."

"Whatever, we can discuss this later!" Rubblekit hissed. "Let's go before we're caught!"

The black, gray, and white tom-kit trotted towards the camp entrance. Quailkit and Otterkit followed him quickly.

Quailkit felt her heart beating faster as they approached the exit. She was really going to see the RiverClan territory, before she was even an apprentice!

"Wait," Rubblekit hissed quietly. He flicked his tail for them to halt. "Oh frog-dung!" he cursed.

"What is it?" Otterkit asked.

"Creekfall is on guard outside," Rubblekit growled under his breath. "We'll have to go out through the dirtplace tunnel."

Quailkit felt a spark of frustration. "Why?" she asked. "It smells horrible over there!"

"It's either that or we get caught," Rubblekit told her.

Quailkit wanted to keep arguing and convince him there might be a way they could sneak past Creekfall. But she knew there was probably no other way. Creekfall's senses were a lot better than theirs-she'd probably catch them easily.

So the three kits turned around and headed towards the dirtplace tunnel, walking as quietly as possible when they passed the apprentices' den.

"Who do you think killed Icepaw?" Otterkit asked.

"I bet it was Thornstep!" Quailkit mewled. "He's so creepy!"

"He *is not*!" Rubblekit hissed. "Thornstep is one of the best warriors in the Clan. At least that's what Wolfsong says. I don't think one of the best RiverClan warriors would kill a WindClan apprentice."

Quailkit rolled her eyes. "I'll be an even better warrior than Thornstep one day," she murmured.

"Maybe you will," Rubblekit replied. "But you'll *never* be as good as Wolfsong!"

"Just because he's your father doesn't mean he's the best," Otterkit grumbled.

"He's your father, too!" Rubblekit pointed out.

"No, he's not!" Otterkit hissed back. "Eeltail is my father. Great

StarClan, Rubblekit, you always forget we're not real siblings."

"Whatever," Rubblekit dismissed. "Let's just go."

They had reached the dirtplace tunnel. Quailkit wrinkled her nose in distaste as the foul stench reached her. The three kits exited the RiverClan camp, trying to hold their breath until finally, they made it into the trees. RiverClan didn't have much forest, but they had enough for catching land prey like voles and birds that usually found their way over here.

The river sounded so much louder and clearer outside camp. Quailkit pricked her ears to listen to it for a few heartbeats before catching up with her friends.

"How do we even get to WindClan?" Otterkit asked.

That thought had not crossed Quailkit's mind at all today. She felt her heart sink just like it had when she discovered the oncoming rain. Speaking of that, she could feel sprinkles of water falling now and gently dotting her soft pelt. She glanced up at the sky, seeing the clouds had grown thicker and darker.

"Well, Brokenwing said WindClan cats smell like rabbits," Quailkit replied, remembering what her father had told her.

"But we don't know what rabbits smell like!" Rubblekit hissed. "Rabbits don't come to RiverClan." Worry was shining in his yellow gaze.

Quailkit flexed her paws in frustration. "It can't be *that* hard," she told him. "They probably just smell like voles. They both have fur and they both live in the same area."

"We have fur and we don't smell like rabbits or voles," Otterkit pointed out. "We smell like fish, and fish don't even have fur!"

"Okay, um..." Panic was rising in Quailkit's chest now. How was she going to save RiverClan? She couldn't if she had no way of getting to WindClan. She began pacing back and forth.

"What are you doing out here?" a hiss sounded close by.

Quailkit, Otterkit, and Rubblekit whirled around to see who had spoken.

To Quailkit's utter shock, it was Redpaw. The ginger apprentice padded towards them, his brilliant green eyes narrowed.

"Redpaw!" Otterkit squeaked in surprise. "How did you find us?"

"I heard you talking outside the apprentices' den," Redpaw replied. "You should really keep your voices down if you're trying not to be caught." His whiskers twitched with amusement.

"We only got caught by you," Quailkit mewed.

"And you better be happy it was just me," Redpaw said. "What if a senior warrior or even Sagestar had caught you? You'd be in so much trouble!"

Quailkit shuffled her paws.

"What are you doing out here anyways?" Redpaw asked curiously.

"We wanted to save RiverClan," Quailkit told him. "We were going to go to WindClan and spy on their camp."

Redpaw blinked in surprise. "Why?"

"So we could find out what their plans are and warn Sagestar!" Rubblekit squeaked.

Quailkit looked into Redpaw's face. "Do you really think a RiverClan cat killed Icepaw?" she asked him.

Fear suddenly crept into the ginger tom's green gaze. He lowered his face and slowly traced a single white forepaw against the grass. "Um...i-it's hard t-to s-say," he mewed. "I-I'm s-sure we'll f-find out eventually."

Quailkit could tell he was trembling and the smell of anxiety was rolling off him strongly. She frowned. "Are you okay, Redpaw?"

Redpaw didn't answer. He seemed to be zoned out, his eyes fixed on the ground and his expression held into a thoughtful frown. He suddenly shook himself and turned to the dirtplace tunnel. "You should...go back," he mumbled. He then trotted off, his tail dragging behind him and his head lowered.

All three kits exchanged confused glances. Quailkit could see her own shock reflected in both of her friends' eyes.

She stared after Redpaw. *Does he know who killed Icepaw?* she wondered.

Chapter 3

"It happened again!"

Quailkit looked up from where she'd been playing with Otterkit and Rubblekit. The three kits broke apart immediately and turned their attention towards the cat who had spoken. It was Cloverheart. The RiverClan deputy's green gaze was burning with anger.

Sagestar leaped down from the large rock in the center of the clearing and faced Cloverheart. "They marked their scent on our territory again?" the black tom asked, his shoulder fur bristling.

Two moons had passed since Quailkit, Otterkit, and Rubblekit had snuck out of camp. Thankfully, they hadn't been caught by anyone other than Redpaw. Pikekit and Eaglekit had been very interested as to what happened and were disappointed when they learned their journey to WindClan had failed. Eaglekit had scoffed at Quailkit and reminded her that he'd told her it wouldn't work.

Lavenderpetal had given birth to four kits: Heatherkit, Reedkit, Firekit, and Shellkit. They were only two moons old, however, and were quite loud. Quailkit noticed she didn't play as much as she used to. She was even starting to realize her attempt to "save" RiverClan had been extremely foolish.

Sagestar hissed, snapping Quailkit back to the present. He bunched the muscles in his legs and sprang back up onto the stone. "RiverClan needs more cats to fight for it," Sagestar announced, loud enough for everyone to hear. There was no need to call a Clan meeting. Everyone started paying attention as soon as Cloverheart's patrol had arrived in camp.

"There are five kits who I wish to apprentice now," the RiverClan leader meowed.

Quailkit felt her heart give a jolt of excitement. Rubblekit and Otterkit gasped.

Quailkit looked over her shoulder and saw Eaglekit and Pikekit scamper over.

Mistcloud and Alliumspark followed close behind, approaching their kits and quickly rasping their tongues over their pelts.

"You need to look clean for the Clan," Mistcloud meowed sternly as she lapped at Quailkit's fur.

"They look clean enough," came the amused purr of their father, Brokenwing. The gray tom was staring down at his kits with pride.

"Quailkit, Eaglekit, Rubblekit, Otterkit, and Pikekit, please step forward," Sagestar called out.

Quailkit felt her paws trembling suddenly and her heart banging against her rib cage. This was really happening! She was going to be an apprentice and fight for her Clan!

She followed her denmates to the large rock and stood between Otterkit and Rubblekit.

Sagestar flicked his tail. "Quailkit," he meowed. "Until you have earned your warrior name, you will be known as Quailpaw. Troutpelt will be your mentor."

The gray tabby known as Troutpelt emerged from the assembled warriors. He approached Quailpaw with a gentle smile on his face and touched noses with her.

"I trust you will pass on everything you know to Quailpaw," Sagestar said.

Troutpelt glanced up at his leader and gave a curt nod. "I certainly will," he promised.

Quailpaw couldn't stop fidgeting with excitement. They would see the whole territory soon! And now she'd be able to attend Gatherings.

"Eaglekit," Sagestar went on. "Until you earn your warrior name, you shall be called Eaglepaw. Nightwhisker will mentor you. I trust she will teach you everything she's learned."

Nightwhisker padded towards Eaglepaw and pressed her muzzle to his before pulling back. Quailpaw felt a flash of sympathy for her brother. Nightwhisker was a very strict she-cat.

"Rubblekit," Sagestar meowed. "Until you earn your warrior name, you will be called Rubblepaw. I have decided that Brokenwing will be your mentor."

Quailpaw perked up when she learned her father would be mentoring one of her best friends. Brokenwing limped towards Rubblepaw and touched noses with him as well.

"Pikekit," Sagestar went on. "Until you become a warrior, you will be known as Pikepaw. Voletail will be your mentor."

The brown she-cat padded over to Pikepaw and pressed her nose to his.

"And finally, Otterkit," Sagestar smiled. "Before I apprentice

Otterkit, I would like to say that Pikepaw and his sister have lived in RiverClan for a long time now, despite having a mother in WindClan. I appreciate all Alliumspark has done to raise these kits and I hope Eeltail is proud of how far his daughter and son have come." He glanced over at the silver warrior.

Eeltail's expression was blank but he nodded in response. Quailpaw felt like he didn't seem to care about his kits becoming apprentices.

"Anyways," Sagestar continued. "Until this she-cat has earned her warrior name, she will be known as Otterpaw. Frostfoot will be her mentor."

When Frostfoot had touched noses with Otterpaw, the whole Clan burst out cheering.

"Quailpaw! Eaglepaw! Rubblepaw! Pikepaw! Otterpaw!"

Quailpaw felt herself beaming with pride. This was perfect. Everything was perfect. She was an apprentice now. When the cheering had died down, Quailpaw noticed Redpaw, Lakepaw, and Sleetpaw walking in their direction just as the meeting broke apart.

"We've made nests for you," Lakepaw meowed.

"Already?" Otterpaw mewed, surprised.

"We made them a few days ago, actually," Lakepaw explained.

"We knew you'd be apprentices any day now," Sleetpaw meowed.

"Your new nests can wait," Nightwhisker said. "For now, we must tour the territory. That is the first thing every new apprentice does. Come along now."

Quailpaw shot Eaglepaw a sympathetic look. Eaglepaw's face was full of anxiety as he followed his mentor and they all exited the RiverClan camp. The patch of trees was so breathtaking to Quailpaw. There was a mixture of beech, ash, and willow. The scent of the river was strong and clear just as it had been when they'd snuck out two moons before.

Troutpelt came to walk at Quailpaw's side. "Are you excited to finally be an apprentice?" he asked.

Quailpaw purred happily. "Of course," she replied.

The gray tom sighed. "I remember when I first became an apprentice," he mewed.

"You had dirt all over your fur, it's hard to forget it," Frostfoot purred from behind.

Troutpelt looked over his shoulder at his sister and snorted.

"Like you didn't," he meowed. "We had just rolled around in a patch of dirt. Sandflower was *so* mad." His whiskers quivered with laughter.

"I think she had a right to be," Frostfoot told him.

"Enough chit-chat," Nightwhisker called from the front of the patrol. "We have apprentices to train."

"Okay, okay, keep your fur on," Troutpelt meowed. His eyes were still full of amusement.

Suddenly, Nightwhisker halted very fast, causing Eaglepaw to bump into her.

"What's the hold up?" Voletail asked.

The fur along Nightwhisker's spine rose. She unsheathed her claws and glanced around the forest warily.

"What is it?" Brokenwing mewed, his tail flicking anxiously.

"WindClan scent," Nightwhisker murmured.

Quailpaw felt her heart speed up. She parted her jaws and drew in the scents around her. She realized there was another scent besides the river. It smelled sort of like a fresh wind and prey...a prey she had never smelled before on the fresh-kill pile. *That must be rabbit-scent,* she thought.

"We have to tell Sagestar," Nightwhisker said sharply. She turned and began stalking back towards the camp. Before she could take many more steps or the patrol could even start to follow, a cat launched themselves from the undergrowth and tackled her to the ground.

Nightwhisker spat fury and kicked at her attacker's underbelly with sharp hind claws. But it barely did any good.

It was a massive white tom with blazing yellow eyes. His claws were unsheathed and his grip on the RiverClan warrior was firm.

Troutpelt leapt forward, barreling into the white tom's side and knocking him over. The two cats slashed at each other's faces, claws outstretched.

Quailpaw gasped. A real fight! *I should help,* she thought. But she didn't know how. She'd had no training at all.

"Apprentices, get back to camp!" Voletail yowled.

Just as she spoke, two more cats flung themselves from the bracken. A yellow tom and a tortoiseshell and white she-cat.

"These are WindClan cats," Otterpaw murmured.

"*GET BACK TO CAMP NOW*!" Voletail yowled again, but this time much louder.

Quailpaw began racing through the forest, heading in the direction of the camp entrance. She could hear the thrum of paws behind her as her fellow apprentices followed at her heels. They burst into the camp not too long after, out of breath and their fur spiking in panic.

Sagestar and Cloverheart, who had been talking in the middle of the clearing, immediately looked over as the five apprentices exploded through the camp entrance. Sagestar rose to his paws and padded towards them, looking curious. The rest of the Clan was watching closely, their ears pricked.

"What's happened? Where are your mentors?" Sagestar asked. Quailpaw could see his claws working anxiously at the grass.

"W-WindClan!" Otterpaw gasped.

"Three warriors came out of nowhere and attacked our patrol!" Rubblepaw meowed.

Sagestar's yellow gaze rounded with worry. "O-okay," he mewed. "Stay in camp. It'll be fine."

Quailpaw padded in the direction of the apprentices' den, following Eaglepaw. She felt shocked and confused.

"Thornstep, Blueheart, Wolfsong, and Creekfall, come with me," Sagestar called. "Cloverheart, you're in charge. Thistleleaf, check over the apprentices and make sure they're okay."

With that, the RiverClan leader and the cats he'd summoned all streamed out of camp.

A long-furred pale gray she-cat known as Thistleleaf padded towards the five apprentices. She only had one eye, and it was bright green. The other one had been clawed away many moons ago, and all that was left was scars across that side of her face.

She was the RiverClan medicine cat. She didn't say much. But she was very efficient in her work. She halted in front of the young cats and scanned her one eye over them. "Is anyone hurt?" she croaked.

They all shook their heads.

Thistleleaf nodded. "I'll get some thyme for the shock," she murmured before padding off.

Quailpaw could not tear her gaze from the camp entrance. Whatever she'd said about the WindClan-RiverClan war as a kit felt very frog-brained now. War was not something to be excited about. After seeing Nightwhisker so viciously attacked, she didn't think she'd ever look forward to a real battle.

Chapter 4

After what seemed like many moons of waiting, the camp entrance rustled and all the battling RiverClan cats entered, limping with many cuts and scratches all over their bodies.

Quailpaw had been the most worried about her father. He already had a permanently injured paw which caused him to be somewhat terrible at fighting. Relief flickered through her, however, when she saw him walking as he normally did amongst the patrol.

Sagestar was in the lead. He limped to the center of the clearing, his breathing coming in thick gasps.

Cloverheart padded towards him. "Did WindClan leave?" the deputy asked.

Thistleleaf exited her den and glanced over at the battle patrol. Worry clouded her one green eye. She turned and disappeared back into her den, getting more herbs, Quailpaw guessed.

"WindClan retreated for now," Sagestar answered Cloverheart. "I saw Rabbitstar in the battle. She said this wasn't anywhere close to over."

"All this over an apprentice!" Thornstep growled irritably as he lapped at a deep cut on his flank. "A rogue could've killed him near our territory and left him at the WindClan border. I don't understand why she's attacking us without any solid evidence."

Sagestar shook his head. "I know this doesn't make sense, Thornstep," he meowed. "But I think we would've scented a rogue on our territory."

Thornstep blinked in surprise. "So you think a RiverClan cat *did* kill Icepaw?" he asked, a snarl edging his voice.

Creekfall came to stand at her Clanmate's side, her green gaze flashing angrily at the leader.

Sagestar drew his lips back, baring his teeth. "I said no such thing," he meowed. "I don't know who killed Icepaw. I don't want to believe it was a RiverClan warrior."

"We can discuss this later."

Quailpaw's attention was taken away from the quarrel. Thistleleaf had left her den with herbs held tightly in her jaws.

"Everyone needs to be treated." Her voice was muffled through the leaves and flowers.

Sagestar dipped his head respectfully to the medicine cat.

"Do you think Brokenwing's okay?" Eaglepaw murmured to his sister.

Before Quailpaw could answer him, Mistcloud padded across the clearing in the direction of her mate, anxiety filling her blue gaze.

Thistleleaf had just stopped at Brokenwing's side and was applying some yellow pulp to his wounds. He winced slightly.

"Is he all right?" Mistcloud asked worriedly.

Thistleleaf swished her tail. "He's fine," she murmured.

Rubblepaw came over to Quailpaw's side. "Wolfsong doesn't look so good," he commented.

Rubblepaw's father had a deep gash in his throat, and he looked a little weak on his paws. When Thistleleaf stopped in front of him, she set to work quickly. After she was done, she mewed, "Go to my den. That wound needs to be watched."

Wolfsong looked as if he might protest but he seemed too weak to try. He limped towards the medicine cat den and disappeared inside.

Quailpaw pressed against Rubblepaw. "He'll be fine," she reassured him.

"They all will."

A few days passed. The Gathering was tonight and Sagestar had decided that all the new apprentices would be attending. Wolfsong's neck injury had healed quite fast and he was now back on warrior duties, much to Rubblepaw's relief.

The sun was setting over the RiverClan camp, casting a pretty red glow. Quailpaw paced around excitedly.

"You're all lucky," Redpaw purred close by. All five of the new apprentices were anxious to get to the Gathering. "We don't get to go this time."

"Well, I think Sagestar has invited plenty of apprentices to attend anyways," Pikepaw giggled.

"I miss my first Gathering," Sleetpaw sighed.

"Me too," Lakepaw agreed with his sister.

Quailpaw halted in her tracks from pacing when Troutpelt approached her. Her mentor was looking kind.

"Are you ready for tonight?" he asked.

Quailpaw nodded. "Yes!" she replied enthusiastically. She noticed there was a large slice down his left ear that had not been there before the WindClan battle.

"Who did that to you?" the Siamese she-cat asked, flicking her tail in the direction of his ear.

Troutpelt blinked. "Darkwhisker," he meowed. "He's the WindClan deputy. Very harsh tom, if you ask me."

Quailpaw stared at the ear scar a little longer. She could see dry blood crusted around it.

After a while, the sun had fully set and the warriors of StarClan sparkled brightly overhead, along with a full moon, signaling it was the night of the Gathering.

"It's time to leave!" Sagestar yowled across camp. He flicked his long black tail and leapt down from the rock, heading towards the camp entrance with Cloverheart and Thistleleaf at his heels.

Quailpaw raced after the three cats with Eaglepaw at her side. Otterpaw, Rubblepaw, and Pikepaw followed behind. Blueheart, Mistcloud, Alliumspark, Thornstep, Troutpelt, and Mallowfang joined the patrol as well.

"I wonder what WindClan will do when they see us?" Otterpaw meowed.

"Probably hiss at us and call us names," Rubblepaw told his foster sister.

Quailpaw took this time to take in the RiverClan territory. She hadn't been given a proper tour yet because of the sudden attack. They were nearing the river. This would be the first time she saw it.

And there it was. The moon was reflected into the dark surface and the trickling filled Quailpaw's ears. She could see Sunningrocks across from it, a place she was told RiverClan and ThunderClan often fought over. The rocks currently belonged to RiverClan, but according to Heronstep, ThunderClan would want them back by the time leafbare arrived. It was currently greenleaf, so they had a while.

They crossed out of their territory and Quailpaw wrinkled her nose as the smell of ThunderClan entered her nose. They smelled completely of forest prey and leaves.

"I hope Sagestar lets us fight in future Sunningrocks battles," Otterpaw meowed excitedly.

Quailpaw glanced over at her friend as she leaped over a large

stick in her path. "I don't think we should be excited for battles," she commented in response.

Otterpaw flashed her yellow-green eyes at Quailpaw. Before she could answer, Troutpelt stepped back to walk at Quailpaw's side.

"Quailpaw is right," Troutpelt told Otterpaw. "When you fight, do it to protect your Clan. A real warrior does not go looking for trouble."

Otterpaw frowned a little but didn't answer the gray tabby.

After a while of walking, the RiverClan cats entered a large clearing with four trees in the center. In front of those trees was a large stone where a creamy-brown tabby tom and a white she-cat were already sitting.

Troutpelt looked at the white she-cat bitterly. "And there's Rabbitstar," he growled.

Quailpaw looked at the WindClan leader. She was very small, with big amber eyes and a bobbed tail. She really *did* look like a rabbit.

The WindClan cats shot RiverClan dirty looks as they entered the clearing. But RiverClan did the same thing back.

They've no reason to be mad at us, Quailpaw thought. *They started this.*

"Let's go talk to the other apprentices!" Eaglepaw chirped.

Among the WindClan cats, Quailpaw spotted a few younger ones that looked around their age. She watched them curiously.

"Don't get too close to WindClan," Otterpaw warned Eaglepaw.

But Eaglepaw didn't appear to be listening. The younger WindClan cats stepped away from their Clanmates and sat in a circle, talking excitedly to each other.

Quailpaw sighed and padded after her littermate. Perhaps the apprentices would be nice. Besides, the Gathering was a time for truce.

There were four WindClan apprentices: a black she-cat, a black and white she-cat, a silver tom, and a small brown she-cat. Eaglepaw was the first to approach.

"Hello," he greeted. A smirk appeared on his face as if he were silently daring one of these WindClan cats to attack him.

The brown she-cat looked over at the five RiverClan apprentices and blinked. "Um...hi?" she meowed.

"Oh, so you're not going to attack us?" Otterpaw asked.

"Not unless you want me to," the brown she-cat purred with amusement. "My name is Mousepaw. What's yours?"

"Otterpaw," she replied.

Suddenly, another apprentice padded over from the WindClan cats. She had light brown fur and bright yellow eyes. She halted suddenly when she spotted Otterpaw and Pikepaw.

Mousepaw seemed to suspect something as well. She glanced over at the light brown cat. "Briarpaw, aren't these your siblings?" she asked.

Briarpaw narrowed her gaze. "Yeah..." she growled. She whirled around and stalked off.

Hurt flickered in Otterpaw and Pikepaw's gazes.

"Anyways, I'm Pikepaw," Pikepaw continued, ignoring Briarpaw. "And this is Quailpaw and Eaglepaw."

"Cool," the black she-cat meowed. "I'm Turtlepaw." She flicked her tail to the black and white she-cat next to her and meowed, "This is Sweetpaw. And this is Rockpaw. They're my siblings." Rockpaw was the silver tom.

"Icepaw was our brother," Sweetpaw mewed sadly.

Eaglepaw narrowed his amber-green eyes. "Well, we didn't kill him," he growled a little defensively.

"I'm not saying you did," Sweetpaw told him quickly. "Rabbitstar is just confused a lot these days. I think a rogue killed him."

"That's what Thornstep said," Quailpaw mewed.

"Are we going to get in trouble for talking to you?" Otterpaw asked.

Turtlepaw shook her head. "I don't see why anyone would get in trouble. The Gathering is for a truce. We have to put the battle behind us for now."

"Let the Gathering begin!"

Quailpaw turned her head towards the leaders that were settled on the large rock. She padded back over to RiverClan and seated herself behind Troutpelt.

While she had been distracted by the WindClan apprentices, she hadn't noticed that ShadowClan had arrived and a silver tabby she-cat had joined the other leaders. The creamy-brown tabby tom was the leader of ThunderClan. She could tell from his scent.

The ThunderClan leader stepped forward, giving his report first. Quailpaw remembered his name was Beechstar now.

"ThunderClan is doing well," he meowed. "One of our queens recently gave birth to a litter of three kits."

Sagestar stepped forward after Beechstar. His yellow gaze was lit with fury. "RiverClan has five new apprentices, Quailpaw, Eaglepaw, Pikepaw, Otterpaw, and Rubblepaw," he began. His shoulders were tense as he spoke. Quailpaw guessed he was about to tell the other Clans what WindClan had done. "Aside from that, WindClan recently launched an unnecessary attack on a RiverClan patrol a few days ago."

Yowls of outrage and shock rippled throughout the gathered cats. Beechstar and Ashstar, the ShadowClan leader, both flicked their gazes towards Rabbitstar.

Rabbitstar rose to her paws, her hackles raised as she angrily faced Sagestar. "Unnecessary?" she spat. "Your cats killed Icepaw!"

Many warriors gasped. The WindClan and RiverClan cats all had bushed up fur and slitted eyes.

Beechstar flicked his tail. "Icepaw?" he meowed. "Didn't he just become an apprentice three moons ago?"

Rabbitstar nodded to the ThunderClan leader. "And Sagestar's cats decided it would be funny to kill him on his first hunting assessment."

Sagestar yowled outrage. "We did not kill him!" he hissed. "I don't know how Icepaw died or who is responsible, but I can assure you, Rabbitstar, none of my warriors would do that!"

Rabbitstar unsheathed her claws. She lashed out at Sagestar, raking him across the muzzle. Scarlet droplets sprinkled onto the stone and Sagestar gritted his teeth in pain as blood oozed from the fresh wound.

A shadow fell over the clearing and every cat lifted their gazes to the sky. Quailpaw saw thick clouds skidding across the moon, blocking out the little light they had.

"StarClan is angry," Ashstar meowed. "I suggest you stop fighting. Rabbitstar, have you any evidence RiverClan is responsible for Icepaw's death?"

"There was RiverClan scent all over his fur when we found him!" Rabbitstar snarled at the ShadowClan leader. "If that isn't evidence, then I don't know what is."

Ashstar flicked her ears. "You spoke of Icepaw's death in the Gathering two moons ago," she meowed. "I recall you said he was found at the border, yes?"

"I know what you're going to say," the small white leader growled. "That since he was at the RiverClan border, he got RiverClan scent on him. But that's not true!"

Ashstar narrowed her gaze. "That's the only logical explanation. Did you not look for badger or fox scent in the area, too? Or even rogue scent?"

"There are no foxes or badgers or rogues in WindClan!" Rabbitstar retaliated. "RiverClan killed Icepaw and that's the truth." She swished her bobbed tail. "Come, WindClan. We're going home. I've have enough of these rabbit-brains."

She leapt down from the Great Rock and began exiting the clearing, a black tabby tom following close behind her. Quailpaw guessed that was the deputy Darkwhisker, the cat who had injured Troutpelt's ear.

The rest of WindClan filed out of the clearing until it was just RiverClan, ThunderClan, and ShadowClan.

"I know I didn't get to make my report, but we should end this Gathering here," Ashstar said darkly. She beckoned her Clan with a sweep of her long tabby tail and they left just after WindClan.

Sagestar nodded and leapt down from the large stone. RiverClan followed him. As Quailpaw padded away from the clearing with her Clanmates, she couldn't help but feel afraid. Rabbitstar was really going to hurt them now.

Allegiances (updated)

RiverClan

Leader|
Sagestar - black tom with long white whiskers

Deputy|
Cloverheart - brown and white tabby tom with green eyes

Medicine Cat|
Thistleleaf - long-furred pale gray she-cat with a missing eye

Warriors|

Thornstep - dark brown tom with white paws

Eeltail - silver tom with dark black tabby stripes
Apprentice, Redpaw

Nightwhisker - black and white she-cat
Apprentice, Eaglepaw

Troutpelt - gray tabby tom with a sliced ear
Apprentice, Quailpaw

Blueheart - blue-gray she-cat with amber eyes
Apprentice, Sleetpaw

Brokenwing - dark gray tabby tom with a twisted forepaw
Apprentice, Rubblepaw

Mallowfang - pale brown tabby tom

Creekfall - golden she-cat with green eyes
Apprentice, Lakepaw

Voletail - short-tailed brown she-cat
Apprentice, Pikepaw

Wolfsong - spiky-furred dark gray tom with a black stripe running along his back

Frostfoot - white she-cat
Apprentice, Otterpaw

Hailclaw - white tom with gray patches

Alliumspark - white she-cat with black speckles along her back, one blue eye and one green eye

Mistcloud - white and gray blue-point Siamese she-cat with blue eyes

Apprentices|

Redpaw - dark ginger tabby tom, one white forepaw and one white hind paw

Sleetpaw - pure white she-cat

Lakepaw - mottled gray tom

Rubblepaw - white tom with black and gray patches and yellow eyes

Otterpaw - sleek dark brown she-cat with yellow-green eyes

Pikepaw - skinny silver tom with golden eyes

Quailpaw - white and gray blue-point Siamese she-cat with blue eyes

Eaglepaw - dark gray tabby tom with amber-green eyes

Queens|

Lavenderpetal - silver-white she-cat with smokey-blue eyes (mother of Mallowfang's kits: Heatherkit, Reedkit, Firekit, Shellkit)

Kits|

Heatherkit - brown and cream Siamese she-kit with blue eyes

(before you yell about genetics and how neither of her parents are Siamese, this cat is based off a friend's OC, and she is obviously distantly related to a Siamese cat so those genes *will* carry over)

Reedkit - pale brown tabby tom-kit

Firekit - silver-white she-kit with bright amber eyes

Shellkit - silver tom-kit with white paws

Elders|

Heronstep - black tom

Foxstripe - russet tabby she-cat with yellow eyes

WindClan

Leader|
Rabbitstar - small white she-cat with a bobbed tail

Deputy|
Darkwhisker - black tabby tom

Medicine Cat|
Heatherpelt - pale brown tabby tom with blue eyes
Apprentice, Leafpaw

Warriors|

Grasspelt - brown she-cat with green eyes

Hareleap - large white tom
Apprentice, Turtlepaw

Sorrelwhisker - tortoiseshell and white she-cat

Sedgeclaw - dark brown tabby tom
Apprentice, Briarpaw

Ambersky - ginger she-cat with blue eyes

Willowcreek - gray tabby she-cat

Firepelt - bright orange tom
Apprentice, Sweetpaw

Yarrowbranch - yellow tom

Fernheart - pale gray she-cat
Apprentice, Rockpaw

Runningfoot - swift rose-cream she-cat

Dustwing - gray tom with black tinges on his muzzle, tail, and back
Apprentice, Mousepaw

Owlwhisker - black-speckled brown she-cat with yellow eyes

Apprentices|

Leafpaw - mottled brown she-cat

Turtlepaw - black she-cat with green eyes

Sweetpaw - black and white she-cat

Rockpaw - silver tom

Mousepaw - small brown she-cat

Briarpaw - light brown she-cat with yellow eyes

Elders|

Plumtail - dappled gray she-cat

ThunderClan

Leader|
Beechstar - creamy-brown tabby tom

Deputy|
Frogleap - gray tom with green eyes

Medicine Cat|
Greenheart - white tom with green eyes

ShadowClan

Leader|
Ashstar - silver tabby she-cat

Deputy|
Specklenose - dappled golden she-cat

Medicine Cat|
Juniperstripe - red-brown tabby tom

Cats Outside Clans

Lucius - long-furred white-blond tom with gray eyes

Chapter 5

A quarter moon went by. RiverClan patrols continued to find WindClan scent on their side of the border. Everyone was waiting tensely for another attack.

One evening, Quailpaw had overheard Cloverheart and Sagestar discussing whether they should launch an attack on WindClan this time, in revenge for the scent markers. Cloverheart had ordered two warriors to stand guard at the WindClan border at a time just recently.

Quailpaw was roused from her sleep as the impatient meow of Troutpelt reached her ears.

"Come on, Quailpaw!" the gray tabby hissed through the den entrance as she lifted her head.

She was due for the dawn patrol. She grumbled sleepily and rose to her paws, stretching the tension from her muscles and shaking out her pelt.

I became an apprentice not too long ago, she thought. *Why is Cloverheart already ordering me on the dawn patrol?*

She quietly stepped around her denmates. She couldn't help but feel jealous of them. Their mentors wouldn't be waking them up for a while.

The sun was barely peaking over the horizon as Quailpaw met Troutpelt outside the apprentices' den.

"Sorry," she mewed shamefully. Last night, she had promised herself she'd wake up extra early to impress her mentor. That plan had obviously failed.

The anger melted from Troutpelt's gaze and he sighed. "It's all right," he purred with amusement. "How can I be mad? I pretty much did the same thing on my first dawn patrol."

Feeling comforted, Quailpaw followed her mentor to the camp entrance where Hailclaw, Eeltail, and Redpaw were waiting. She had completely forgotten Redpaw had been told to join the dawn patrol as well.

"So she finally woke up," Eeltail grunted moodily.

Troutpelt's tail-tip twitched and Quailpaw felt a flash of frustration in her chest.

"Don't tell me you never slept in as an apprentice, Eeltail," Troutpelt retorted. "We all did."

Eeltail scoffed. "Whatever," he growled. "Let's get going."

As the patrol set out of camp, Redpaw dropped back to walk at Quailpaw's side.

"Don't mind Eeltail," he murmured kindly. "He's a bit of a grump in the morning."

"Otterpaw and Pikepaw told me he's always like this," Quailpaw mewed.

"He can be," Redpaw admitted. "He's my mentor, though, so I spend a lot of time around him. He has some soft spots."

Quailpaw thought about what Redpaw had said. Did that mean Thistleleaf, who never spoke, had moments where she could never shut her muzzle? She flung that thought away. There was no way in the name of StarClan that Thistleleaf had ever held a conversation. Or had she...? *I guess everything's different than it first appears,* she thought.

They emerged from the trees and arrived onto the shore of the river. Quailpaw remembered hunting here for the first time a few days after becoming an apprentice. It had been a difficult task and she certainly needed to work on it. If she was going to be a true RiverClan warrior, the first thing she needed to be able to do was catch fish. Perhaps she'd ask Troutpelt to take her out fishing later.

They continued walking until the familiar rabbit-scent of WindClan reached her nostrils. She watched as Eeltail and Hailclaw approached the border and left their scents.

"Do you smell any WindClan?" Troutpelt asked cautiously. His nose twitched.

Hailclaw lowered his muzzle to the ground and drew in the scents. He lifted his head again and shook it. "Surprisingly, it's stale," he replied. "Maybe WindClan has finally gotten tired of messing with us. Maybe Rabbitstar finally accepted that we didn't kill Icepaw."

"No, I don't think that's it," Eeltail meowed darkly. "They're probably planning another attack. I think they want to catch us off-guard. We better report this to Sagestar."

Quailpaw felt the fur along her spine bristle. It was as if someone was...watching her. She looked over her shoulder, her heart beating faster. She could see nothing but the dark undergrowth behind her. But there seemed to be another scent...

"Is everything okay?" Redpaw mewed.

Quailpaw looked over at him and nodded, trying to flatten her bristling pelt. "J-just thought I smelled something," she told him.

Troutpelt seemed to notice something was wrong, too. He lifted his muzzle and sniffed carefully. "There's another cat," he murmured.

Hailclaw and Eeltail looked over curiously.

"Another cat?" Hailclaw repeated questioningly.

The bushes rustled and a tom with a long, white-blonde pelt stepped out. He blinked a mysterious set of pale gray eyes at them.

Eeltail hissed and leapt forward, tackling the stranger to the ground and pinning him down by the chest. Eeltail dug his claws into the tom's fur.

"Who are you?!" Eeltail demanded angrily.

"Not trying to cause any harm," the strange tom replied. He twisted himself over and freed himself of Eeltail's grasp. He shook out his sleek pelt. He gave the RiverClan patrol a bit of an offended look.

"You're in RiverClan territory," Troutpelt growled. "So get off."

The tom sniffed. "I've seemed to touch a nerve," he rumbled. "Can't a rogue simply travel in peace?"

"Not in our territory you can't!" Hailclaw retaliated. He unsheathed his claws.

"I've been hanging around here for quite some time, actually," the rogue said. "I'm surprised you didn't catch me earlier." He paused. "My name is Lucius, by the way."

Hailclaw, Eeltail, and Troutpelt all exchanged glances. Quailpaw could see something flash in each of their gazes and turned to Redpaw. The dark ginger tabby apprentice was looking extremely uncomfortable.

"Lucius, we'd like to take you back to camp with us," Eeltail meowed. Suspicion was lighting the silver warrior's gaze.

Then Quailpaw understood. *They think this cat murdered Icepaw,* she thought. The RiverClan warriors and even Ashstar had said a rogue very well could've killed the WindClan apprentice.

"Why do you want me to do that?" Lucius asked.

"Our leader would like to know about you," Hailclaw said. "Don't worry, it won't be long."

Lucius seemed to hesitate. He stayed quiet for several heartbeats before giving in, sighing. "Oh, alright," he meowed. "But

it better be quick."

"It will," Troutpelt assured him.

When they arrived in camp, surprised glances met them. Eaglepaw, Otterpaw, Pikepaw, and Rubblepaw had been practicing battle moves and broke apart when the dawn patrol entered.

Sagestar leapt down from the rock in the center of camp and met the patrol. "Who is this cat?" he asked, eyeing Lucius suspiciously.

"Can we talk in private?" Eeltail asked. "This is important."

Sagestar met Eeltail's gaze and blinked. "Okay," he meowed. He turned to Hailclaw and Troutpelt. "Keep watch of this tom. Eeltail and I will be right back." The two toms headed for the leader's den and disappeared inside.

Quailpaw crossed the clearing and sat with Otterpaw and Rubblepaw, while Pikepaw and Eaglepaw settled not too far away.

"What's going on?" Otterpaw murmured anxiously.

Quailpaw swallowed hard. "You'll see," she replied. She wanted to explain to her friend why Lucius was in the camp, but she felt it wasn't her place to do so.

Redpaw padded towards them and sat down, curling his tail over his forepaws and fixing his gaze on the grass underneath. He still looked quite uncomfortable.

Quailpaw suddenly had a flashback to the night her, Otterpaw, and Rubblepaw had snuck out of camp when Redpaw had found them. She remembered the dazed look that had come into his eyes when she'd asked him who he thought killed Icepaw. He seemed to know something about the WindClan apprentice's death that he wasn't saying.

Did Redpaw kill Icepaw? Quailpaw thought, horrified. She pushed that thought away immediately after. Why would *Redpaw,* one of the sweetest, gentlest cats in RiverClan, kill another cat for no reason at all?

Still, that didn't explain the discomfort he seemed to show every time Icepaw was mentioned.

Finally, Eeltail and Sagestar emerged from the leader's den. Sagestar leapt up onto the rock. The whole Clan gathered immediately (except for those who were out of camp).

"Eeltail has explained to me that this rogue named Lucius has

been lurking around our territory for a while," the RiverClan leader begun. "He tells me he thinks he might have something to do with Icepaw's death."

Sagestar looked down at the white-blonde rogue. "Lucius," he meowed. "Please step forward."

Lucius's silver gaze was completely shocked as he walked towards the stone, staring up at the black tom. "Who is Icepaw?" he asked.

Sagestar flicked his tail. "How long have you been around here?" he asked.

Lucius didn't answer for a few heartbeats. "I'd like to say six moons," he meowed. "Why?"

"Did you ever come across any young toms on the moorland?" Sagestar asked again, his claws unsheathing and sheathing against the stone.

Lucius bared his teeth. "Is this Icepaw you're referring to?" he growled. "I haven't killed anyone! I've just been trying to find a good place to settle and it's taking a while."

Sagestar flattened his ears against his head. "I don't want to go around blaming random cats for Icepaw's murder," he said, "but I'd rather it be you than one of my warriors." He jumped down from the rock and faced the long-furred tom.

Lucius peeled his lips back into a snarl, revealing a set of sharp teeth. "I swear on my life, I've never, *ever* killed a single cat," he retorted. "*Especially* not a young cat."

Sagestar held the rogue's gaze for quite some time.

Quailpaw could feel Otterpaw and Rubblepaw tensing beside her. She herself was trembling a little bit. Was Lucius lying? Did he really kill Icepaw? Would the mystery finally be solved? Would WindClan apologize and forget about the whole thing?

Lucius backed away from the leader, the snarl on his muzzle fading and the rage dying from his distinctive silver eyes. He stepped back a few paces. "I'm not going to fight with you," he meowed calmly. "I haven't done anything wrong. Well, except for walking around on your territory. I apologize dearly for that. I will go somewhere else. But I promise, I don't know who killed this young tom. It certainly wasn't me or anyone I've met."

Sagestar's shoulders slumped. He closed his eyes and turned away from Lucius. "Alright, I believe you," he meowed, opening his eyes again. He glanced at the rogue. "You may leave now. Creekfall,

Frostfoot, escort him, please."

"I can see myself off," Lucius grunted.

"I don't care," Sagestar replied. "Creekfall and Frostfoot will be assisting you anyways."

The two she-cats padded towards the long-furred tom. Lucius flashed one last glare at the RiverClan leader before turning and following Frostfoot and Creekfall out of camp.

Just as they were leaving, a yowl of surprise came from Thistleleaf who had stuck her head out of her den to watch. Redpaw jumped slightly and scrambled to his paws.

Sagestar looked over at the medicine cat, shock in his eyes. "What is it?" he asked in panic.

Thistleleaf stepped out of her den, swishing her fluffy gray tail upwards.

Quailpaw followed to where the she-cat was pointing, her gaze traveling towards the sky. Her heart lurched in her chest when she saw a cloud of smoke rising in the distance.

"That's coming from WindClan!" Cloverheart yowled.

Chapter 6

Omg I haven't updated this in a while. Sorry, I lost interest in Wattpad for a little bit but I'm back now and ready to write more of this!

The whole of RiverClan was tensed as they watched the smoke gradually rising over the moorland that neighbored their island. No one knew what to do. Should they help? Or leave WindClan to their own issue? There were kits and elders in the camp who could not fend for themselves. Was that fair?

Quailpaw exchanged glances with Otterpaw and Rubblepaw.

"We have to help them," Cloverheart meowed, causing everyone in the clearing to turn their heads and look at him. The deputy glanced over at Sagestar who was staring at him with shock.

"After the way WindClan has treated us?" Eeltail called out to him. "They don't even deserve a scrap of crow-food from us. Why should we help?"

Sagestar raised his tail for Eeltail to be quiet. The silver tabby warrior shut his jaws, glancing down at his paws angrily.

"Cloverheart is right," Sagestar meowed. "The warrior code tells us to never leave another Clan to suffer. It could be the end of WindClan if we leave them to this fire."

"Where will they stay after the fire is gone?" Frostfoot asked.

Sagestar sighed. "I don't know," he replied to the white she-cat. "We can worry about that later. I want Cloverheart to lead a patrol with Thornstep, Nightwhisker, Troutpelt, Brokenwing, Frostfoot, Quailpaw, Otterpaw, and Rubblepaw."

Quailpaw felt shock and excitement course through her body as Sagestar said her name. She couldn't help but lift her head a little higher.

She heard Otterpaw gasp beside her and saw Rubblepaw swivel his ears forward.

Troutpelt rose to his paws, gazing up at the RiverClan leader, his face full of confusion. "Do you think it wise to bring along three newly-made apprentices, Sagestar?" the gray tabby asked.

Quailpaw felt her heart sink at her mentor's question. Did he

think she couldn't handle it? After all the training they'd been through together?

Sagestar looked over at his warrior and nodded firmly. "This will be a good experience for them," he answered.

"Then shouldn't Eaglepaw and Pikepaw go, too?" Eeltail asked, his amber eyes narrowed. He was clearly upset that Sagestar hadn't picked him for the patrol and was ready to be aggressive about it.

Sagestar twitched his tail in annoyance. "Last time I checked, *I* was the leader, Eeltail. Not you," he retorted. "If I wanted Eaglepaw and Pinepaw to go, I would've mentioned their names. They'll get plenty of more opportunities to be apart of something big like this." He paused for a second, clearly waiting to see if Eeltail would argue any further. When he didn't, he continued on. "Okay, no more wasting time. Cloverheart, gather your patrol and head out fast."

When the group of felines reached the WindClan border, Quailpaw could see the smoke rising from the hollow in which the other Clan's camp was located. The empty, treeless moorland gave a perfect view of the dark gray substance rising in the air.

Quailpaw caught an acrid, sour tang in the air as the breeze blew in their direction. She wrinkled her nose in distaste.

"I think I can see some WindClan cats outside the camp," Cloverheart reported. "Let's go."

Keeping close to Otterpaw and Rubblepaw, Quailpaw followed her Clanmates across the open stretch of land. She was surprised at how prickly the grass was here. So unlike the silky shards found on RiverClan territory.

The smoke came within better view as the patrol neared the WindClan camp. They picked up their pace until they were sprinting across the moor. As they moved closer to the dip in the earth, Quailpaw could see bright orange flames lapping at the air and swarming around the camp. She'd never actually seen fire before. Only heard stories of what it was like.

Cloverheart let out a yowl to alert the WindClan cats of their arrival. Quite a few of them were outside of the camp, watching in horror and fear as the flames consumed their home. At Cloverheart's call, one of the cats looked over his shoulder.

Quailpaw immediately recognized the same white tom who had attacked Nightwhisker on their first tour of the territory. The memories of that day wracked her mind for just a few heartbeats

until the WindClan warrior rose to his paws. A small black she-cat had been sitting next to him and Quailpaw remembered from the Gathering that her name was Turtlepaw.

She was looking in shock and her sides were heaving. Quailpaw couldn't help but feel sympathy for the apprentice.

The white tom halted in front of the RiverClan patrol, his amber eyes narrowed skeptically. "What are you doing here?" he growled out. "Don't you know RiverClan isn't welcome on WindClan territory?"

"We came to help, Hareleap," Cloverheart responded to the large warrior unflinchingly.

Hareleap had a nasty burn on his shoulder. The snowy-white fur had been torn away and all that remained from that area was raw, bleeding flesh.

The other WindClan cats began moving towards the RiverClan patrol with suspicion and hostility in their gazes. They all looked extremely battered and wounded from what had happened to their camp.

Suddenly, a white shape emerged from the flames, running as quickly as possible with a young cat clamped in her jaws. From the short tail and small frame, Quailpaw knew that was Rabbitstar. She was carrying a light brown she-cat by the scruff and Quailpaw also remembered that was Briarpaw, Otterpaw's and Pikepaw's sister who had remained in WindClan.

Otterpaw was gazing at Briarpaw worriedly but she held back. After the foul treatment Briarpaw had given her at the Gathering, Quailpaw didn't blame her for keeping her distance.

Rabbitstar set the young she-cat down and a light brown tabby tom rushed over to her with herbs in his jaws. That was Heatherpelt, the WindClan medicine cat. Briarpaw looked unconscious.

Rabbitstar quickly turned her attention to the RiverClan cats. "What in the name of StarClan are you doing here?" she snarled, her voice shaky but the ferocity in her gaze real. Her fur had been singed in a few areas, adding some faint black spots to her body. The fire still raged on in the camp behind the small WindClan leader.

"Thistleleaf noticed smoke rising from your territory," Cloverheart meowed politely to the elderly she-cat. "Sagestar sent us to help."

Rabbitstar peeled her lips back, revealing her stained yellow teeth. "We don't need your help!" she snapped.

"Are you sure?" Thornstep asked. "You have nowhere to stay."

Rabbitstar glared at the dark brown warrior. "The moor has plenty of room for us. We will make a temporary camp in a different area until we are able to fix our own. WindClan doesn't need RiverClan, *especially* after what you did to one of our apprentices. So go home and tell Sagestar he needs to keep his nose out of our business."

Quailpaw tensed her muscles.

"Are you serious?" Nightwhisker hissed. "Build a temporary camp? Now? Tomorrow? The next day? After every single one of your warriors has been injured and most in shock? What kind of heartless, insensitive leader are you, Rabbitstar?"

Cloverheart shot the black and white she-cat a warning glare but she ignored him. She stepped forward, facing Rabbitstar fearlessly.

Rabbitstar hissed. "I care for my Clan above anything else," she retaliated. "We can make another camp by tonight. Not a full camp, but we can put together dens and nests."

Nightwhisker scanned her sharp yellow gaze over the crowd of WindClan warriors. "These cats are injured and weak," she meowed, glancing at Rabbitstar once again. "I think it's best if you come home with us where a camp has already been built. We can shelter you for however long you need until your camp has been fully repaired."

The black tabby shape of Darkwhisker came up beside Rabbitstar. The WindClan deputy stared at Nightwhisker with a thoughtful expression. "She has a point, Rabbitstar," he meowed.

Rabbitstar whipped her head over to glare at her deputy. "Are you insane?" she growled. "These cats *killed* Icepaw! You want to trust them?"

Darkwhisker blinked at her. "We don't know who killed Icepaw, Rabbitstar," he replied to her softly. "It could've been RiverClan but we don't know which warrior it was. I say we can trust these cats."

Rabbitstar glared at her forepaws, her ears flattened against her head. "I don't like this," she grumbled. She lifted her gaze and stared straight at Cloverheart as Nightwhisker retreated back to the patrol. "Fine. But if your stupid little Clan gets any ideas, just know, we won't hesitate to attack."

"Sounds fair," Cloverheart meowed. He flicked his tail. "Come

with us. Sagestar would like to know about this."

Chapter 7

Briarpaw had regained her consciousness shortly after Nightwhisker had convinced WindClan to come home with them. The light brown apprentice had to be supported by Leafpaw, the medicine cat apprentice, as they trekked across the moorland in the direction of RiverClan territory.

Quailpaw kept close to Rubblepaw and Otterpaw as usual, her gaze never swaying from the WindClan warriors padding in front of them. They had chosen to bring up the rear of the large patrol so they could watch everything.

Turtlepaw was padding off to the side, not too far from where Quailpaw and her friends were. The Siamese she-cat blinked her eyes in surprise to see how shaken the small black apprentice appeared to be.

Not caring what Otterpaw and Rubblepaw would say, Quailpaw broke away from them to catch up with Turtlepaw. They'd only spoken once at the last Gathering, so she anticipated for this conversation to be a little awkward.

"Hey! Turtlepaw!" Quailpaw whispered. She came up to the other she-cat's side.

Turtlepaw flashed her a surprised glance, frowning slightly. There was a deep cut on her muzzle, and the sight caused Quailpaw to flinch a little.

"Can I help you?" Turtlepaw asked. Her voice shook slightly.

"Are you okay?" Quailpaw mewed.

Turtlepaw's whiskers twitched with laughter. "What's it to you?" she replied. "We're supposed to hate each other, remember?"

Quailpaw swallowed. "I guess," she murmured. "What happened to your muzzle? That cut looks...bad."

Turtlepaw narrowed her eyes to stare at the dark red wound sliced over her mouth, swiping her tongue over it carefully. "I hit it on a rock when I was running from the fire."

"That sounds painful," Quailpaw mewed. "Does it hurt?"

Turtlepaw's green gaze was full of suspicion all of a sudden. "Honestly, why do you care, Quailpaw? I'm technically not supposed to be speaking to you..."

Quailpaw twitched her tail. "Sorry, you just looked upset," she mewed.

Turtlepaw huffed a sigh.

"What's going on here?"

Quailpaw looked up quickly as a harsh voice reached her ears. She spotted the intense amber gaze of Rabbitstar glaring at her from close by. The WindClan leader bared her teeth. "Get away from Turtlepaw! I don't need any nasty RiverClan cat blowing her fish-breath onto the next generation of WindClan!"

"Hey, leave her alone!" Troutpelt pushed his way through the group of cats to face Rabbitstar. The entire patrol camp to a halt to watch. "She's just an apprentice!"

Rabbitstar hissed at the gray tabby warrior. "So was Icepaw! Yet you felt the need to kill him."

"So are you're saying you're going to kill Quailpaw?" Troutpelt scoffed, unsheathing his claws. "I'd like to see you try."

Quailpaw felt her heart pounding like crazy in her chest. She backed away from Rabbitstar and Turtlepaw, bounding back over to Otterpaw and Rubblepaw.

The group began moving again and Quailpaw couldn't tear her gaze from the ground.

"What was that about?" Rubblepaw asked.

"I...just felt bad, okay?" Quailpaw told him. "Icepaw was Turtlepaw's brother. I'm sure she's still grieving over that *and* she just lost her home. Things can't be good right now for her."

"Who cares?" Otterpaw meowed. "That's a WindClan cat. We can't trust them right now."

The three were quiet for a few heartbeats until Quailpaw said, "Funny. Why are we letting them stay in our camp?"

The entirety of WindClan and the escorting RiverClan patrol finally made it to the RiverClan camp. The whole Clan was gathered in the clearing, awaiting the return of Cloverheart.

The brown and white deputy led Nightwhisker, Troutpelt, Brokenwing, Thornstep, Frostfoot, Quailpaw, Rubblepaw, and Otterpaw into the camp. His green gaze fell onto Sagestar who was in the center. He rose to his paws and crossed the clearing to greet his deputy.

"What's happened?" the leader asked.

"WindClan is outside our camp. We have brought them here because they have nowhere else to stay," Cloverheart explained.

Understanding flooded Sagestar's eyes, although he looked a bit hesitant.

Rabbitstar emerged from the group of WindClan cats to face the black tom. Her head was held high and she looked strong despite the singes in her pelt. "Your warriors were able to convince me to allow my Clan to stay with yours," the elderly she-cat meowed flatly. "But just know, we will be leaving the minute our camp has been repaired."

Sagestar nodded. "I understand, Rabbitstar," he meowed to her. "Please do not be afraid around us. Make yourself at home, don't be afraid to talk to my cats. Let this be a time of truce for us."

"This isn't the Gathering," Rabbitstar hissed. "I can ignore your cats and disrespect them all I want. You deserve it—"

"We offer you shelter and you speak to us like that?" Alliumspark called out.

"Yeah, be grateful we swallowed down our bitterness towards you just to be kind for a second," Eeltail hissed, coming to stand at the speckled she-cat's side.

"We could send you away now," Wolfsong spoke up. "You should be thanking us. Your cats would suffer if you weren't given a place to stay."

"I thought my words had burned through your thick head," Nightwhisker growled.

Sagestar didn't silence the cats who had spoken up against the WindClan leader. Instead, pride filled his yellow gaze and he stared at Rabbitstar. "Disrespect us, and we will chase you off our territory and you will be forced to rebuild a destroyed camp when all of your warriors are injured and exhausted. Do you understand that, Rabbitstar?"

Rabbitstar glared at Sagestar viciously. The fur along her spine was bristling and her ears were flat against her head. Quailpaw expected her to leap onto Sagestar and claw his muzzle.

But she gave in, sighing loudly. "Fine," she spat. "I appreciate the help RiverClan has offered, but this doesn't change my opinions on every single one of you." Under her breath she added, "I'll find out which one of you killed Icepaw if it's the last thing I do."

Chapter 8

The next day came and when Quailpaw awoke in the apprentices' den that morning, she was confused to see new cats surrounding her until she remembered everything that had happened the day before. WindClan had agreed to stay with RiverClan until their camp was repaired. It had rained during the night so the fire was finally put out, but the RiverClan camp was dripping wet now.

Quailpaw followed Eaglepaw out of the den, looking around for Troutpelt as she stepped out into the open. The tom's familiar gray tabby fur soon caught her eye and, mewing a farewell to her brother, the Siamese apprentice crossed the clearing towards her mentor.

The dawn patrol slipped into camp as she walked across the soaked grass, and she noticed several WindClan warriors were sitting awkwardly at the edges of the camp.

"Hey, Troutpelt!" she greeted her mentor good-spiritedly. She wanted to treat this like a normal day, no matter how uncomfortable it was with all these strangers. "What are we doing today?"

Troutpelt turned his head to look down at Quailpaw. "Well, Thistleleaf was needing someone to help her go out and collect some more marigold. Would you be up for that?"

"Oh! Sure!" Quailpaw piped up. "Can I bring someone with me?"

"I don't see why not," Troutpelt chuckled.

Quailpaw turned back to the apprentices' den just as Redpaw came out into the clearing. Otterpaw, Rubblepaw, Pikepaw, Sleetpaw, and Lakepaw were already out of the den and going to find their mentors as well.

Quailpaw scampered over to Redpaw, smiling. "Hey!" she mewed. "Thistleleaf needed us to gather some marigold for her. I guess she has a lot of injured WindClan cats to take care of." Quailpaw just then thought about Heatherpelt and Leafpaw, the two medicine cats of WindClan. What had happened to them? Why couldn't they help? Were they injured too? Or just busy?

A flash of anxiety crossed Redpaw's green gaze for a second but it faded not long after. "O-oh, Thistleleaf?" he asked uncertainly.

Quailpaw frowned at him. "Yeah...why?" she meowed.

Redpaw shook himself. "Nothing." His whiskers twitched with amusement. "Sorry, I'm just a bit tired. Yeah, let's go!"

Relief flickered in Quailpaw's chest. She had felt a little worried for her friend but now he seemed back to normal. As they were heading towards the camp entrance, a voice called after them.

"Wait up!"

The RiverClan apprentices halted and turned around. The familiar jet-black pelt of Turtlepaw came into view as she bounded in their direction. "You're collecting herbs?"

"Yeah," Redpaw replied.

"Can I come too?" Turtlepaw asked, her paws kneading at the grass in a sort of impatient way.

"Of course!" Quailpaw chirped.

Redpaw narrowed his eyes. "I don't know how our leaders will feel with us being around each other," he meowed.

Turtlepaw sighed. "Yeah, I get that. But I don't wanna be cooped up here all day! Besides, we won't be out of camp for too long."

Quailpaw flicked Redpaw's shoulder with her tail-tip. "It'll be okay," she reassured him. She understood his concerns, but making friends with the "enemy" would make things easier. Perhaps after the WindClan camp was fully repaired, they'd realize this whole Icepaw drama could be put to the past.

Redpaw gave in finally. "Alright," he sighed. With that, he turned and took the lead out of the RiverClan camp.

Quailpaw padded at Turtlepaw's side, curiosity suddenly pricking at her mind. "How are you holding up? You mentioned at the last Gathering that Icepaw was your brother..." Her voice trailed off. Should she really have asked that? Turtlepaw might get upset and run back to camp.

But the black she-cat just cast her an unreadable gaze. She could see grief there, too, but there were so many different emotions that Quailpaw had issues telling which one the other apprentice was really feeling.

"It's...been hard. But I still have Sweetpaw and Rockpaw. They're my siblings as well. It's been easier to get through it with them here," Turtlepaw replied. Her words had started out slow and sad but gradually became more positive. Quailpaw guessed she was feeling just fine.

Redpaw glanced over his shoulder at the two of them. "Icepaw

was your brother?" he meowed in surprise.

Turtlepaw nodded. "Yep."

"Huh," Redpaw mumbled, turning his head away and continuing on.

Eventually, the three apprentices came across the familiar orangish-yellow flowers of marigold. They each took a mouthful and were then ready to head back to camp. This trip had been a lot easier and relaxed than Quailpaw had thought. Having Turtlepaw around was helpful and, quite honestly, she liked the WindClan apprentice's company.

When the three cats finally returned to the RiverClan camp, Quailpaw and Turtlepaw headed towards Thistleleaf's den. When Quailpaw realized Redpaw wasn't following them, she halted and glanced over her shoulder. Turtlepaw did the same.

The ginger tom had stopped in his tracks, staring at the medicine den with hesitation and anxiety brimming in his green eyes. He didn't even seem to notice Quailpaw and Turtlepaw staring at him expectantly.

"Are you okay, Redpaw?" Quailpaw asked worriedly. "We need to get these herbs to Thistleleaf. She needs them."

"That's okay, I'll go ahead and take them from you right here."

Quailpaw turned her head and saw the long-furred medicine cat standing before them, her single eye gazing at them warmly.

Quailpaw dropped her mouthful at Thistleleaf's paws, and Turtlepaw did the same not long after. Redpaw still did not move until Thistleleaf gazed at him rather sharply. He approached the gray she-cat with slow steps and dropped his share of marigold before her. There was a moment when their muzzles almost touched when Redpaw lifted his head, which caused him to back up quickly.

Thistleleaf stared at him with an expressionless gaze before taking up the herbs the apprentices had delivered and headed back to her den.

Quailpaw frowned and glanced over at Redpaw, but he was already heading to Eeltail. She exchanged a confused glance with Turtlepaw.

"What's gotten into him?" Turtlepaw mewed.

"I don't know," she meowed, still staring after the tabby tom. "Redpaw just acts weird sometimes."

Chapter 9

"No, do it like this," Troutpelt instructed. The gray tabby tom crouched low to the ground, striking out at Frostfoot who was helping him demonstrate the battle move to the apprentices. Keeping his claws sheathed, he pinned the white she-cat to the ground.

Frostfoot immediately kicked at his belly fur with her hind paws, until he fake yowled and got off her.

Troutpelt turned to the apprentices afterwards. "When you pin your enemy down, make sure you're guarding your underbelly. That's your weakest spot. If Frostfoot had had her claws out, she would've injured me badly."

Quailpaw sat with Otterpaw, Rubblepaw, Eaglepaw, and Pikepaw in the Training Hollow, listening to Troutpelt carefully. She was worn out from the hours of training, and by now, the sun was starting to sink below the horizon. She knew the WindClan patrol would be returning from fixing their camp soon. It had been a quarter moon since they'd arrived, but they still had a lot of work to do.

On the bright side, the WindClan and RiverClan warriors appeared to be getting along a little better. Well, except for Rabbitstar. She was still determined to hate every single warrior of RiverClan, especially Sagestar. That was where the problem played in the most. If the WindClan leader wasn't willing to befriend her neighbors, her cats would still blame RiverClan for Icepaw's death.

"Let's head back to camp," Troutpelt meowed. "You can get something off the fresh-kill pile and then rest."

As they headed out of the hollow, Quailpaw couldn't help but feel relieved to be getting back. Rabbitstar had forbade RiverClan and WindClan apprentices from training together, so going back would mean Quailpaw could see Turtlepaw again. In the last quarter moon that WindClan had been here, she had become good friends with the black she-cat. She had even gotten to know her siblings, Rockpaw and Sweetpaw, a little better.

As they padded through the RiverClan territory, Quailpaw noticed Rubblepaw was walking at her side. "You'll eat with us

tonight, won't you?" he asked, blinking his yellow eyes hopefully.

Quailpaw nodded eagerly to her friend. "Of course!" She felt that was a sort of fish-brained question for him to ask. Why wouldn't she eat with him and Otterpaw?

"I mean, without Turtlepaw?" Rubblepaw spoke again, causing Quailpaw's breath to hitch in her throat.

"Why can't Turtlepaw join us?" she asked, feeling hurt. Did he not trust Turtlepaw? Was he determined to hate all WindClan cats just as Rabbitstar hated RiverClan?

"Because you never pay attention to us when Turtlepaw is around!" Rubblepaw told her, his voice growing a little sharp. Then he seemed to feel bad for lashing out like that. He turned his face away from her, staring at the ground.

"Look, Rubblepaw, I'm sorry," Quailpaw mewed. "Turtlepaw is just a good friend. Mistcloud and Brokenwing both told us when Eaglepaw and I were kits that making friends in the other Clans was important. It would keep the peace." She brushed her tail against his shoulder. She suddenly realized how much she hardly saw her mother and father these days. She had been so caught up in her training and spending time with Turtlepaw, that she hadn't stopped to pay them a visit. Even now, Brokenwing was walking with them, since he was the mentor to Rubblepaw. But as she gazed at his dark gray tabby form, limping along on an injured forepaw, she felt she barely knew him.

Maybe I am *growing a little distant from my RiverClan friends and family,* she thought. She hadn't spent too much time with Eaglepaw either, but he seemed distracted by Pikepaw anyways. The two toms had become best friends and were practically inseparable.

"I know that," Rubblepaw meowed, rousing her from her thoughts. He didn't speak again for a few heartbeats. "That was a little harsh of me to say. I guess it's fine if you invite Turtlepaw, but *please, please* promise you'll acknowledge our existence this time?"

Before Quailpaw could feel hurt again, she saw amusement dancing in the freckled apprentice's eyes and smiled at him, her whiskers quivering with laughter. "Yeah, I promise," she giggled.

As the patrol reached the camp entrance, a yowling split across the clearing. All previous thoughts drained from Quailpaw's mind as she gazed at the scene happening in front of them. Ambersky, Sedgeclaw, Yarrowbranch, Owlwhisker, and Briarpaw had returned from the WindClan camp, but not too far from them stood

Rabbitstar as she flashed an accusing glare at a familiar long-furred tom. He was not a Clan cat.

Thinking hard, Quailpaw realized that was Lucius, the strange rogue tom that had appeared on their territory a while back. He had been the suspect of Icepaw's death, but had been let off by Sagestar when they realized there was no way it was him.

Rabbitstar's shoulder fur bristled and her amber eyes were a raging fire. "It was *you,* wasn't it?" she snarled. Her claws unsheathed, digging into the grass below.

Sagestar stood atop the Clanrock, his eyes glaring down at Lucius. For once, he seemed to be on Rabbitstar's side.

"No, of course not!" Lucius hissed, arching his back. "I just want a break from this! You fish-smelling rabbit-brains have already tried to accuse me of killing this cat named 'Icepaw' or whatever! Can't you understand that it *wasn't* me?"

Quailpaw took a few paces closer, Otterpaw and Rubblepaw at her side.

Rabbitstar thrust her muzzle into the pale cream tom's face. "Then *why* were you hanging around WindClan territory today, huh? Waiting for another one of my warriors to kill? Fox dung to that! You'll never lay a claw on any of their pelts!"

Lucius backed up from the WindClan leader. "And I wasn't planning to," he growled out. "Like I told Sagestar before, I am merely a loner minding his own business. Yes, I stay relatively close to the Clans' territories, but I have no intent to harm."

Sagestar leapt down from the Clanrock and faced the long-furred tomcat. He slumped his shoulders as he sighed, looking defeated. "Rabbitstar, he's right," he meowed. "I don't know why I was ready to blame Lucius again. Last time he gave me plenty of evidence that he had nothing to do with Icepaw's death."

Rabbitstar whirled around to stare intensely at the RiverClan leader. "Well you have bees in your brain! You're a new leader! Of course you'll trust a loner as soon as he gets down and begs for mercy! You're an idiot! I wish Aspenstar was still alive! At least *he* had some sense."

Hurt blossomed in Sagestar's eyes and he backed up from the white feline. "Fine, Rabbitstar," he meowed. "You can blame Lucius. But if you decide to do anything to him, *you will* do it on WindClan territory. Not here. I will not have murder on my land."

"Mouse dung to that!" she spat at him.

Quailpaw felt rage boiling in her veins as Rabbitstar carelessly bullied her leader. She respected Sagestar more than she could put into words. She wanted to stand up for him, but she didn't know what to say.

"RiverClan was okay with killing Icepaw! But you can't stand to have this rogue killed on your territory?" Rabbitstar taunted.

"Are you even listening to yourself?" That was Alliumspark that spoke up. The freckled white she-cat stood in the center of camp, glaring at Rabbitstar through slitted eyes. "You literally just said that Lucius killed Icepaw. Now you're saying that RiverClan did? Make up your mind, old flea-bag, before we chase you and your pathetic Clan out of our territory! You should be grateful you have somewhere to stay after your camp was destroyed!"

Sagestar nodded fiercely at his warrior's words. "Who do you *really* blame, Rabbitstar?" he asked.

Rabbitstar glared at the tom. "I blame RiverClan. I was a mouse-brain to turn my accusations to this random loner. You can leave, Lucius." The white-blond tom didn't need telling twice. He turned tail and fled out of the camp, never to be seen again.

Rabbitstar thrust her face into Sagestar's, her lips peeled back into the most ferocious snarl Quailpaw had ever seen. "*WINDCLAN, ATTACK!*"

Chapter 10

As soon as Rabbitstar's voice had echoed around the clearing, she leaped on top of Sagestar. Despite her small size and old age, she was able to pin the sleek black tom to the ground and they began wrestling violently in the grass, snarling and hissing at one another as their claws slashed angrily at each other's pelts.

The WindClan and RiverClan warriors began charging at each other, the RiverClan cats stronger but the WindClan ones swifter.

Yowling filled Quailpaw's ears as she stood there, stupefied by what was going on. All the battle training Troutpelt had given her in her short time as an apprentice came rushing to her mind as the familiar form of Willowcreek came pounding towards her.

Unsheathing her claws, Quailpaw prepared herself to face the WindClan she-cat. Willowcreek was bigger than her, but not by much. WindClan cats were just naturally smaller than RiverClan cats who were sleek and muscular.

But Quailpaw was not fully grown quite yet, so she really had to be careful. Willowcreek barreled into her, knocking her to the ground. Seeing that Willowcreek hadn't thought about protecting her underbelly, the Siamese apprentice kicked out with her hind claws, feeling the warm stickiness of blood ooze from the flesh.

Willowcreek yowled and instinctively leapt off her. But she wasn't done. She turned back to Quailpaw, her lips drawn back into a vicious snarl. "Taking on a warrior, huh, foolish apprentice?" Willowcreek taunted.

Quailpaw crouched down, preparing to leap. She tried not to let Willowcreek's words bother her. Instead she rushed forward and slashed her claws across the she-cat's muzzle, causing her to yowl in pain.

Willowcreek shook the blood from her vision and chased after Quailpaw, causing the apprentice to make a run for it. She didn't know every battle move yet, but Willowcreek did. She was at a real disadvantage here, even if she *had* managed to get the warrior on the nose.

Quailpaw realized running from her opponent was a real act of cowardice. She skidded to a halt, whirling around to face the gray

tabby, her claws outstretched and ready.

But before either she-cat could do anything, a flash of ginger cut across Quailpaw's vision. She realized Redpaw had leapt in front of her and was swatting at Willowcreek angrily. He scored his claws across the gray feline's ear, and she yowled before turning tail and fleeing away.

"Are you okay?" Redpaw asked Quailpaw, his voice rising over the sounds of battle.

Sharp pain sliced through Quailpaw's shoulder. She looked down and noticed a cut there, surprise rippling through her. Then she realized that Willowcreek must've gotten her when she first pinned her down.

She looked at Redpaw and nodded fiercely. "I'll be fine," she reassured him. Her shoulder still stung though and she had difficulty walking as she attempted to move back to the fray.

Redpaw rushed up to her side and she looked up, seeing Turtlepaw come hurtling towards them. Hesitation flashed in the black she-cat's green eyes as she approached the two RiverClan apprentices. Quailpaw expected her to stop, but instead she leapt at Quailpaw and slashed her claws down her flank.

Shock and pain washed over her as Turtlepaw dashed off and back into the mass of flailing paws and tails. The heat of the new injury scored through Quailpaw's body.

"Quailpaw!" Redpaw gasped, rushing over to her and nudging her to her paws as her legs gave way underneath her. Blackness was crowding around her vision. She couldn't understand. Why had Turtlepaw done that? Sure, she might've been trying to look loyal to her Clan in that moment, but why had she aimed for such a brutal injury?

But the thoughts running through Quailpaw's head began to weaken as dizziness filled her. She realized she was walking but her vision was blurred and her legs were numb. How much blood was she losing?

Redpaw appeared to be guiding her towards the medicine cat den and she detected anxiety radiating from his pelt.

Am I dying? Quailpaw wondered. She felt herself slump down into what appeared to be moss, before she was taken away into unconsciousness.

When Quailpaw finally awoke, she was quite confused. She lifted her head sharply and noticed that Thistleleaf was standing a few tail-lengths away. That was when everything came rushing back to her. A stab of pain in her side made her turn her head. A coating of cobweb and some type of herb had been applied to the wound, but it still hurt immensely.

"Th-Thistleleaf?" Quailpaw stammered weakly.

The one-eyed medicine cat stopped from sorting through her herb store and turned to Quailpaw, her gaze narrowed in surprise.

"You're awake," she murmured.

Quailpaw nodded. "Did we win?"

Thistleleaf didn't reply immediately. She scraped her paw against the den floor as if she were trying to get something off it. "Well, I think so," the medicine cat replied. "Shortly after Redpaw brought you in here, Rabbitstar ordered WindClan to retreat. But a lot of them said they weren't going because they didn't want to be staying in a destroyed camp. So many WindClan warriors are still here, but Rabbitstar has gone with Darkwhisker, Heatherpelt, Leafpaw, and a few others."

Quailpaw realized this was the first time she had heard much from Thistleleaf. She was usually so quiet and closed off that she thought there was no way she'd ever held a conversation with another cat. But clearly she was wrong.

"Sagestar let them stay?" Quailpaw asked in surprise, suddenly remembering that it was Turtlepaw who'd given her this flank injury. Betrayal tore into her heart like a thorn. *I thought we were friends...*

Thistleleaf nodded. "He's an understanding leader. I think he realized that many of them didn't want to attack—"

Before the gray she-cat could finish her sentence, another cat barged into the den. It was Turtlepaw. The jet-black apprentice's flanks were heaving and her eyes were full of stress. She glanced over at Quailpaw and some relief managed to pass over her gaze, but the fear overcame it by a lot.

"Oh, you're okay!" the apprentice exclaimed, crossing the den to where Quailpaw was lying down in her temporary nest. "Great StarClan, Quailpaw, I'm so sorry! I didn't want Rabbitstar to think it was a traitor and I acted as fast as I could!" She sat back on her haunches.

"Last time I checked it was polite to ask permission to visit

patients," Thistleleaf said rather bitterly.

Turtlepaw jumped and whirled around, as if she had just noticed that the RiverClan medicine cat was there. "Sorry!" she meowed. "I was just worried about Quailpaw..."

Thistleleaf shook her head. "Fine," she murmured. "Keep an eye on her. I need to go fetch some more marigold."

When the medicine cat had gone, Quailpaw looked up at Turtlepaw. She had to admit, she felt very relieved.

"I forgive you, Turtlepaw," she mewed. "This injury is gonna hurt like a whole pack of foxes is nipping at me for a quarter moon, but I'll be okay." Her whiskers quivered in amusement at her own words.

Turtlepaw let out a long sigh, her shoulders slumping a bit. "After you were taken here, everything got crazy!"

"Yeah, Thistleleaf told me what happened," Quailpaw sighed. "No offense, but Rabbitstar is a pain in the tail."

Turtlepaw's tail curled in amusement. "She can be," she admitted. "But she really cares about her Clan and...well, she's stressed over Icepaw. She just wants to give him some justice by finding his murderer." Her eyes turned sorrowful as she spoke of her dead brother. "I want to know, too."

Quailpaw stretched her neck forward until she could brush her muzzle against Turtlepaw's shoulder. "You'll find out one day," she promised. "If it *was* RiverClan, then I'll understand if you don't want to talk to me anymore."

Turtlepaw shook her head. "I really don't think it was RiverClan," she said. "I think it was a rogue. Like that Lucius cat. Although...he *did* seem pretty innocent to me."

Quailpaw stared at her friend seriously. "What was Icepaw like?" she asked.

Turtlepaw lowered her head a bit. "He was...a mess to tell you the truth. He was very headstrong but he was so courageous and funny. All he wanted was to be a warrior. In fact, when we were kits, he told me he wanted to be leader one day. I can't stop thinking about how he was killed only a quarter moon into his training." Tears welled in her emerald eyes and Quailpaw sat up as much as her injury would allow her to.

"I'm sure Icepaw is watching you from StarClan. I don't think he'd want you to mourn," she murmured. "He probably wants you to be happy. In fact, I bet he wants you to be the best warrior of

WindClan, just for him."

Turtlepaw glanced at Quailpaw, her expression lighting up. "Thanks, Quailpaw," she purred.

The Siamese she-cat dipped her head. "Don't mention it."

Thistleleaf returned and said something about Quailpaw needing rest. Turtlepaw was forced to leave and so Quailpaw laid back down. She honestly was starting to feel tired again, and slipped into a warm sleep.

Chapter 11

A few days had passed since the battle. Thankfully, Quailpaw's wounds were healing up rather fast and Thistleleaf had told her she'd be back to training tomorrow. Quailpaw was relieved. She felt trapped in the medicine den and was itching to get out. Turtlepaw visited her a few times to check and see if she was okay. She'd also received visits from her parents, Eaglepaw, Otterpaw, Rubblepaw, and Redpaw who seemed especially worried.

Over the span of the few days since the battle, many more WindClan warriors had left RiverClan to be with Rabbitstar again. The remaining WindClan cats were mostly apprentices. Sagestar had been more than happy to let them stay, which surprised Quailpaw. She would've expected he'd want them out since they'd attacked. But she wasn't going to complain much. Due to Sagestar's kindness, she was able to spend more time with Turtlepaw.

Quailpaw moved to the entrance of the medicine cat den, just wanting to get some fresh air. As she did so, her mother, Mistcloud, stalked across the clearing, her ears flat against her head and her tail lashing behind her. Brokenwing was standing several fox-lengths away from her, his gaze fierce and bitter. Did they have an argument? Concern flickered in Quailpaw's chest. Eaglepaw emerged from the apprentices' den, his amber-green eyes troubled as he headed towards Quailpaw.

Quailpaw wondered what was wrong with her brother. He sat down beside her and she shifted over to make more room for him. "What happened with Mistcloud and Brokenwing?" she asked. Eaglepaw sighed and stared at his paws. "They had a pretty nasty argument," he responded.

Quailpaw blinked. "How bad?"

"So bad that Creekfall and Voletail had to move Mistcloud back. Alliumspark also tried to butt in but by the time she got there, the fight was practically over," he explained. Neither of them spoke for several heartbeats. A question was burning in Quailpaw's brain but something held her back from asking it. But there was no need. Eaglepaw answered it as if he'd read her mind. "They said...that they didn't want to be mates anymore."

Dread pooled into Quailpaw's body and she flattened her ears. "Great StarClan, why?" she meowed. Eaglepaw shrugged. "I have no idea, Quailpaw," he told her.

"Eaglepaw, come on!" Nightwhisker suddenly called across the clearing. The black and white she-cat was looking rather impatient. "You can talk to Quailpaw after training!"

"Fox dung!" Eaglepaw cursed under his breath. He shot an apologetic glance to Quailpaw. "I'll see you later." With that, he scampered across the RiverClan camp towards his mentor. Quailpaw watched them exit through the camp entrance and wondered where Troutpelt was. She'd be going back to her warrior training with him tomorrow.

Quailpaw's blue eyes drifted away from the entrance and down to her forepaws. It seemed the camp was mostly barren as many cats were on patrol, apprentices were out training, and a few others

had joined Quailpaw in the medicine den from their battle injuries. Thistleleaf had gone out to collect more herbs as she was constantly using them. Though not many were injured, the injuries that were there were fatal.

Mistcloud had left the camp and Quailpaw had no idea where Brokenwing was. Hopefully they weren't fighting somewhere else away from camp. As the Siamese apprentice sat there pondering over the latest events she'd witnessed, she hardly noticed as another cat slipped in beside her. She jumped but relaxed when she recognized Turtlepaw. Warmth flooded her immediately.

The apprentice was holding a very battered-looking pike in her mouth. She dropped it at her paws. "So...I was allowed to try fishing today and I managed to catch this!" Quailpaw tried very hard not to burst out laughing. "What did you do to it?" she purred.

Turtlepaw shuffled her paws against the ground awkwardly. "Err...well, I'm not fit for fishing. I'm supposed to hunt rabbits and mice, you know? I ended up using my claws most the time but hey, not bad for a WindClan cat, right?"

Quailpaw examined the pike, seeing how torn its flesh was and how its blood soaked the grass underneath it. She couldn't hold back any longer and exploded in a fit of laughter. Turtlepaw swatted her around the ear but her green gaze was dancing with amusement. "Be grateful, fish-breath! I caught this for you!"

Quailpaw smirked at Turtlepaw and bared her teeth playfully.

"Who are you calling 'fish-breath'? Huh, rabbit-breath?" she teased. Turtlepaw flicked her tail. "Oh, I'll get you."

"That is enough," came a new voice. The apprentices whipped their gazes over and froze as they spotted Thistleleaf. She'd returned with several herbs in her mouth. Her one undamaged eye glared at the two she-cats almost threateningly which was a huge surprise. Thistleleaf was usually gentle and kind.

She glanced over at Turtlepaw and the two held each other's gazes for many heartbeats until Turtlepaw took off towards the apprentices' den. Thistleleaf turned to Quailpaw. "Get back to your nest," she ordered, her voice muffled through the herbs.

Snatching up the pike, Quailpaw hurried back to her nest.

The next day came quickly. Quailpaw was roused the next morning by Troutpelt awaking her from her nest. Last night, Thistleleaf had allowed her to return to the apprentices' den which was a huge relief.

"Come on, Quailpaw," Troutpelt meowed.

Quailpaw scrambled to her paws, shaking scraps of moss and bracken from her pelt before following her mentor out of camp. "Redpaw and Eeltail will be joining us," Troutpelt told her.

"How come I never get to train with Rubblepaw and Otterpaw?" she complained. Troutpelt flicked her over the head with his tail-tip. "You have gotten to, silly. But it's nice for you to train with an older apprentice so you're prepared when facing a more experienced enemy."

Quailpaw wrinkled her nose. "Okay then why do you always pick Redpaw? What's wrong with Sleetpaw and Lakepaw?" she asked.

"You know, I'm starting to get the impression that you don't like Redpaw," Troutpelt said as they headed towards the Training Hollow.

"I never said that!" Quailpaw defended herself. "I think he's a great apprentice and a great friend. I just wanted a little change, that's all."

Troutpelt glanced over his shoulder and smirked at her. "How great do you think he is?" he asked.

Quailpaw frowned. "Why does that matter?"

"Maybe there's a reason I'm always paring you two up," Troutpelt chuckled.

Realization hit Quailpaw like a rock. "W-wait...you think I *like* Redpaw?" she asked in complete and utter shock. How could anyone even think that? She didn't spend a whole lot of time with Redpaw and certainly didn't have feelings for him. *I like Turtlepaw,* she thought. Wait. Did she really just say that to herself? Shame washed her ears. Did she *really* have feelings for a WindClan cat?

And not to mention, a she-cat? Have two she-cats ever become mates before? *Stop it, Quailpaw. She's just your friend.*

Troutpelt seemed a little surprised by her question. "My mistake, I guess," he giggled. "Well anyways, we'll be there soon. Eeltail and Redpaw are waiting for us."

But Quailpaw could hardly focus. What was she going to do now?

Chapter 12

Quailpaw had to admit, her first few days back to training weren't that exciting. Currently, she was stuck in the elders' den with Rubblepaw, searching Heronstep and Foxstripe for ticks. Thistleleaf has given them moss soaked in mouse bile. It was one of the grossest things Quailpaw had ever smelled in her life. *Well, I'm finally paired up with Rubblepaw, at least,* she thought, trying to cheer herself up.

Unfortunately, Quailpaw had been given Foxstripe for this task. Foxstripe had been a very fierce and respected warrior before retiring and her russet pelt was covered in battle scars. She was still sharp-tongued and grouchy which made Quailpaw very nervous. "There's still one behind my ear," Foxstripe grumbled out moodily.

Quailpaw lifted the mouse bile towards the elderly she-cat's ear, watching the tick fall off.

"Don't be so harsh, Foxstripe," Heronstep meowed to his denmate. "Quailpaw is doing an excellent job. And so is Rubblepaw." Quailpaw envied Rubblepaw for having the nice elder. The freckled apprentice beamed at Heronstep's comment but shot Quailpaw a sympathetic look.

"Ah, her father always complained when I told him to check Berrycloud for ticks. She doesn't seem to be enjoying this, are you, Quailpaw?" Foxstripe meowed in a sort of taunting way.

Quailpaw blinked in surprise. "You mentored my father?" she asked.

Foxstripe scoffed. "Didn't tell you, huh?" she inquired. "Of course he didn't. Brokenwing was a timid apprentice and I think I scared him a few times. Probably doesn't want to remember those days. But I was a good mentor to him. Look how he's turned out." For the first time ever, Quailpaw saw a smile break across the russet elder's muzzle.

Then she sighed. "I felt bad for 'im, honestly," she murmured. "He

was born with a twisted paw and his mother had the heart to name him Brokenkit." She shook her head. "Aspenstar called him Brokenwing to show how far he'd come and how strong he was." Her whiskers quivered. "You have a good father, Quailpaw. I remember him trailing after Mistpaw constantly and it wasn't a surprise to anyone when they became mates."

They may not be mates for much longer, she thought fearfully.

"I think you've gotten all the ticks. Thank you, Rubblepaw," Heronstep purred.

"Yeah, you can go too, Quailpaw," Foxstripe rasped. Quailpaw was surprised by how kind the elder was being all of a sudden and felt respect for her surge through her chest.

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather here below the willow tree for a Clan meeting!"

Rubblepaw and Quailpaw both perked up immediately as Sagestar's voice boomed across the clearing. They raced from the elders' den together. "What do you think happened now? Was it WindClan?" Rubblepaw muttered to her. "I guess we'll find out," she responded.

Rubblepaw and Quailpaw sat down together and, as they did so, Quailpaw felt another cat slip in beside her. Heat flashed in her chest when she spotted Turtlepaw. "Oh, hey!" she greeted happily.

The black apprentice flicked Quailpaw's shoulder with her tail-tip. "Hey, fish-breath," she purred.

Quailpaw rolled her eyes in amusement. All the WindClan apprentices except for Leafpaw and Briarpaw still remained in RiverClan. The last few warriors that had decided to stay left just two sunrises ago. Turtlepaw, Rockpaw, Sweetpaw, and Mousepaw were adjusting with RiverClan and still refused to go home until the WindClan camp was fully repaired.

"Thank you," Sagestar meowed out, causing silence to fall. Everyone had been muttering nervously, all wondering if this meeting had something to do with WindClan. Not every RiverClan warrior

agreed with the WindClan apprentices staying here.

"I have gathered you all here to make four kits into apprentices!" Sagestar announced. "Lavenderpetal and Mallowfang's kits, Reedkit, Heatherkit, Firekit, and Shellkit have reached the age of six moons. Please step forward!"

The four kits stumbled towards the willow tree, Lavenderpetal and Mallowfang following close behind them. The hot-headed Mallowfang was looking especially proud as all attention was fixed on his kits. Quailpaw realized she'd hardly interacted with any of those kits.

But she noticed Rubblepaw's yellow gaze was trained on Heatherkit, watching her every move with admiration sparkling in his expression.

"Reedkit, please step forward," Sagestar meowed, swishing his long black tail. The pale brown tabby kitten took a few steps towards the RiverClan leader's perch, gaze shining with excitement. "Until you have earned your warrior name, you shall be known as Reedpaw. Thornstep will be your mentor."

The dark brown tom rose from the assembled crowd and approached Reedpaw, touching his nose to his head. "I trust Thornstep to pass down everything he knows to you," Sagestar added.

He then beckoned Heatherkit forward. "Heatherkit, until you should become a warrior, you will be called Heatherpaw. Mistcloud will be your mentor."

Quailpaw watched as her mother moved to the front of the crowd to press her nose to Heatherpaw's. Rubblepaw's gaze shone as he watched Heatherpaw. Quailpaw noticed Mistcloud was looking rather bitter as she stood there with her new apprentice. Brokenwing must be on her mind. Fear jabbed her heart.

"Firekit, come forward," Sagestar moved on. Firekit was renamed Firepaw and her mentor became Wolfsong. Shellkit was the last one, now being called Shellpaw. Alliumspark was assigned as his

mentor.

"Before we break up this meeting, there are three apprentices who are ready to be warriors," Sagestar beamed. He flicked his tail. "Redpaw, Sleetpaw, and Lakepaw, please come forward."

Quailpaw felt pride surge through her veins as she watched Redpaw and his littermates. She was slightly jealous of them but knew she'd be joining them in just a few moons.

"Redpaw, Lakepaw, Sleetpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend RiverClan even at the costs of your lives?" Sagestar asked.

"I do," all three of them spoke in unison.

"StarClan, I pray for you to look down on these three apprentices. They have trained hard in order to understand your noble code and I commend them to you as warriors in their turn." He paused. "Redpaw, from this moment on, you will be called Redwing. StarClan honors your bravery and kindness and we welcome you as a full warrior of RiverClan." He leapt down from the willow tree to press his muzzle against Redwing's forehead. Redwing shakily licked his shoulder in return. Sagestar then turned to Sleetpaw. "Sleetpaw, you will now be called Sleetfall. StarClan thanks you for your courage and skill and we welcome you as a full RiverClan warrior." After licking the white she-cat's head, the leader finally turned to Lakepaw. "And Lakepaw, from this day forward, you will be known as Laketuft. StarClan honors your loyalty and determination and we are pleased to welcome you as a full warrior of RiverClan."

"Reedpaw! Heatherpaw! Firepaw! Shellpaw! Redwing! Sleetfall! Laketuft!" the Clan broke out into a chorus of cheers.

"Clan dismiss-"

Before Sagestar could finish his sentence, someone burst in through the camp entrance. The whole Clan averted their attention to the newcomer and gasped in shock. Quailpaw had expected it to be Rabbitstar or some other WindClan cat but it wasn't either. It was a

large and muscular tom with long, sleek very pale cream fur and piercing gray eyes. It was Lucius, the strange rogue cat that had been interrogated by both WindClan and RiverClan. He had been the main suspect of Icepaw's death for a short period of time but after being unable to prove him guilty, the Clans were still unsure who to blame for the death of Icepaw. Although, Rabbitstar still swore it was some cat in RiverClan.

"What are you doing here?" Sagestar's sharp question snapped Quailpaw back to the present. The pale feline was staring up at him with a rather unreadable expression.

"I want to help," he meowed.

"Help with what?" Sagestar pressed.

"I want to help find who killed that cat you told me about. To prove I'm innocent," Lucius explained.

"You aren't just helping Sagestar," came a snappy voice from behind the rogue. Rabbitstar slipped into the RiverClan camp behind the tom and swiveled her amber gaze to Sagestar. "Greetings, Sagestar," she said rather bitterly. "Sorry to interrupt what appears to be a Clan meeting but I think this could benefit both of us."

"The meeting was just ending," Sagestar told her.

Rabbitstar twitched an ear. "Perfect," she murmured. "Well, I think we should take Lucius's offer seriously, right? I invited him to WindClan for a little bit and we dug up Icepaw's body. Yes, that's very horrible but it was for investigating purposes, let me assure you. The smell of the cat who killed him is still very faintly on his pelt but now that Lucius has it, I'm going to allow him to search through your cats and find who killed Icepaw."

Sagestar yowled defiance as did many other RiverClan warriors. "You *do not* have my permission to do that," the black leader hissed.

Quailpaw felt Turtlepaw stiffen beside her. She brushed her tail against her friend's side in an attempt to give some comfort. Icepaw was Turtlepaw's brother. Hearing about him again must be painful.

"I'm afraid it's not up to you," Rabbitstar shot back.

"Yes, it is," Sagestar growled. "These are *my* cats and let me remind you, I'm letting a few of yours stay here while your camp is being repaired."

Rabbitstar twitched her tail. "The camp is almost done so they are expected to return soon. And let me remind *you,* Sagestar, that these cats are staying here by their own choice."

"You haven't stopped them," Sagestar retorted.

Cloverheart suddenly came over to Sagestar's side, his tail flicking behind him angrily. "You have no right to be on RiverClan land," he hissed out.

"I can be here while WindClan apprentices are," Rabbitstar said coolly.

"Fine, I'll let Lucius search my cats but not today. He can come tomorrow. The Gathering is tonight and I'd like to prepare my cats for that." When Rabbistar looked like she was about to argue, Sagestar added, "It's either that or another battle. And neither of us can afford injured warriors now."

Rabbitstar huffed. "Okay, fine," she agreed. "But tomorrow when me and Lucius return, we will be taking the WindClan apprentices back home. They can't stay here and relax while their Clanmates are working hard to repair their home." With a swish of her bobbed tail, Rabbitstar and Lucius turned and headed out of the RiverClan camp.

Chapter 13

Quailpaw was a little disappointed that she hadn't been chosen for the Gathering but she supposed it was for the best. The tensions between RiverClan and WindClan scared her a little. She didn't want to see a fight break out if she was honest with herself. Otterpaw, Rubblepaw, and Pikepaw had been chosen and all of Lavenderpetal's kits would be attending. Rubblepaw was seated very close to Heatherpaw, chatting with her happily. Quailpaw smiled for them but did not leave her place in the apprentice den entrance. Eaglepaw had gone to bed early.

Sagestar emerged from his den with Cloverheart. With a swish of his long tail, the RiverClan leader called out, "It's time to go to the Gathering!" With that, the large patrol slipped out of the RiverClan camp.

Quailpaw stared after them for a few heartbeats.

"Hey, Quail," Turtlepaw purred as she moved to the den entrance beside her. Quailpaw jumped a little, having completely forgotten that Turtlepaw had also stayed behind. Excitement flickered in her chest.

"Hi," she greeted back warmly. Sweetpaw, Rockpaw, and Mousepaw had been picked for the Gathering as well and so only she, Turtlepaw, and Eaglepaw were the remaining apprentices in the camp.

Turtlepaw sighed. "It sucks that I have to go home tomorrow," she murmured.

Quailpaw tried to push down her disappointment at remembering Rabbitstar would be in RiverClan again the next day to collect the apprentices and have Lucius sniff out which cat killed Icepaw. "W-well, don't you want to go home?" Quailpaw inquired.

Turtlepaw sat back on her haunches and curled her tail over her

paws. "I guess," she replied. "But I like being with you! You're a good friend, Quailpaw. You've been very kind to me despite the trouble our Clans are going through."

Quailpaw shrugged. "It's not your fault it's happening," she meowed. "And Sagestar is very kind to let you stay here. Most leaders wouldn't be that compassionate."

Turtlepaw twitched her whiskers. "Do you think he's only letting us stay so he can use it against Rabbitstar?"

Quailpaw frowned. "Hmmm...I haven't thought about that. Maybe. But who knows? Adults do weird things."

She felt her heart speeding up in her chest and couldn't exactly understand why it was doing that. She felt very different around Turtlepaw and remembered the thoughts that had crossed her mind when Troutpelt took her out training. *Dear StarClan, what's happening to me?* she wondered.

"I just hope all of this gets settled soon," Turtlepaw spoke again. "I miss Icepaw and I'd love to know who killed him so I feel some sort of peace but...it could've been anyone. I still think it was a rogue. The warrior code strictly forbids Clan cats from killing one another."

"Yeah, but there's always cats who break the code," Quailpaw pointed out. "It could've been a ThunderClan cat or a ShadowClan cat. If it *was* a Clan cat, I'm putting my bets on ShadowClan. They're a creepy bunch."

Turtlepaw chuckled softly but the smile faded almost immediately. Grief shone in her brilliant green gaze as she stared down at her paws.

Quailpaw moved a little closer to her friend until their pelts were brushing. "It's okay," she murmured. "Icepaw is watching you from StarClan now. I'm sure he doesn't want this war to be happening over his death."

Turtlepaw sighed. "You're right," she meowed. After a pause, she

looked at Quailpaw. "I'm...gonna go to sleep. It's late."

Quailpaw blinked at her. "I'll follow," she said, yawning. She realized she was also quite tired and, as she headed to her nest, she prayed that tomorrow wouldn't be absolutely disastrous.

The entirety of RiverClan was tense the next morning. Troutpelt took Quailpaw out fishing for a little bit where she managed to catch a pike but most mentors seemed too worrisome to bother with training their apprentices.

Quailpaw set her catch on the fresh-kill pile, feeling rather proud of it.

Sagestar leapt up onto the willow tree, his piercing yellow gaze fixed on the camp entrance as if he were expecting Rabbitstar to emerge at any given second. Cloverheart seated himself at the tree's base, his posture stiff.

Quailpaw padded over to her denmates who were all huddled together at the edge of the clearing. Turtlepaw, Mousepaw, Sweetpaw, and Rockpaw sat with them. Quailpaw moved in beside Otterpaw and Rubblepaw. Pikepaw and Eaglepaw had their heads bent close together, talking in a hushed conversation. Firepaw, Heatherpaw, Shellpaw, and Reedpaw were glancing around the clearing uneasily.

Why were they so nervous? They all insisted no one in RiverClan killed Icepaw but it seemed they were worried Rabbitstar would find someone out today.

Everyone's attention was averted when the camp entrance began to rustle and the small white body of Rabbitstar slipped into camp, her ears pricked and her eyes fierce. Lucius emerged from behind her.

Sagestar flicked his tail. "Greetings, Rabbitstar," he meowed darkly.

The WindClan leader tilted her head back to stare up at him. She twitched an ear but did not respond. "Alright, Lucius," she growled, staring at the rogue, "get to work."

The pale cream tomcat nodded firmly and began weaving his way

through warrior after warrior, his nose twitching as he took in their scents. Quailpaw noticed that Redwing was looking especially tense as Lucius neared him. He squeezed his eyes shut and dug his claws into the grass.

Quailpaw wondered why he was so nervous.

Lucius brushed his muzzle against Redwing's flaming scarlet pelt and froze. He eyed the young warrior suspiciously and Quailpaw held her breath. No. There was no way Redwing was the killer! Then relief flickered in her chest when Lucius gave up and moved to the next cat which was Alliumspark.

It seemed like moons had passed before Lucius finally got to the apprentices. Quailpaw knew she was innocent but she couldn't help feeling slightly anxious. To her surprise, he even sniffed the WindClan apprentices which made Rabbitstar narrow her eyes a little but she didn't object.

When Lucius's nose moved through her own fur, Quailpaw could feel his hot breath and stiffened. But she kept telling herself there was no need to worry.

When Lucius had finished examining every cat in RiverClan, he lifted his head to stare at Rabbitstar. "I can't find the scent," he reported.

Rabbitstar's gaze flashed angrily. "What?" she snarled. She padded closer to the rogue and unsheathed her claws. "It has to be here!" she roared. "When Icepaw died, I smelled RiverClan all over him! There is no way in StarClan that at least *one* of these cats isn't responsible!"

Yowls of protest and defiance rose up in the clearing as all anxiety melted away. Cats fluffed up their fur, arched their backs, flattened their ears, bared their teeth.

"Obviously it wasn't us!" Lavenderpetal hissed out.

"You did what you came to do and you did not find what you were looking for. It's time for you to go home and take your mangy

apprentices with you!" Eeltail stepped forward, his lips drawn back in a ferocious snarl.

Quailpaw felt defense for Turtlepaw bubbling up in her chest but she forced herself to stay quiet.

Rabbitstar whipped around to face the silver warrior. "Right, and your kits are half-WindClan. Are they mangy, too?" She tilted her head quizzically.

Eeltail twitched his ears irritably. "Of course not! They were raised RiverClan!"

Rabbitstar flicked her short tail and turned back to Lucius. "Get out of here, you useless fleabag!" she growled at him.

Lucius looked taken aback. "Excuse me?" he hissed. "I did what you told me to do!"

"Your senses are clouded with your rogue stink!" Rabbitstar snapped. "I should've known better than to entrust an outsider with this task." She whipped her head over to gaze at the four WindClan apprentices. She jerked her muzzle in a beckoning motion. "Come now. It's time for you to go home. You've spent plenty of time here." She glared at Lucius again. "As for you..." She flexed her claws through the grass. "Get off the Clans' territories and *never* come back."

Lucius stared at her with a fearful gaze before darting towards the camp entrance and disappearing.

Quailpaw had a difficult time fighting down the disappointment at watching Turtlepaw leave with the rest of the WindClan apprentices. Rabbitstar led them out of the clearing and when they had vanished completely, Sagestar turned back to his cats.

"We will never shelter WindClan again," he declared. "I've been too soft. I have a feeling Rabbitstar isn't giving up. She still thinks RiverClan killed Icepaw." He lashed his tail angrily. "We will continue to have two guards at the border at all times." He raked his gaze around his warriors. "Mallowfang and Voletail, you two

head out there. It's your turn to guard. Tonight, Mistcloud and Wolfsong will guard. Now get back to your duties."

The black tom leapt down from the tree branch he had been perched upon and retreated to his den. Many cats headed towards Cloverheart to be placed on patrols.

Quailpaw stood there, staring at the camp entrance, wishing Turtlepaw would tell Rabbitstar she wanted to join RiverClan. Being apart from her friend hurt like a whole thorn bush was clamped around her body.

Chapter 14

Clouds skidded across the moon, a breeze rustled through the grass and trees. The newly arrived leafbare turned the winds bitter and wilted every plant in sight. A quarter moon had passed since Rabbitstar's investigation of the RiverClan warriors and they'd been completely undisturbed since then.

Night overhung the world like a shadow. The silvery light from the moon was dimmed as thick, dark clouds swept across the sky. This oncoming storm was promising more than just rain.

Every RiverClan cat was tucked away in their nests and Quailpaw's ears and whiskers twitched as dreams of catching fish at the river danced in her mind.

But all the peace was disrupted as a loud, drawn-out caterwaul split across the clearing. Every cat was awoken immediately and a screech of pain was heard from the warriors' den.

Quailpaw scrambled to her feet and dashed out into the camp, Rubblepaw and Eaglepaw following at her heels.

"No! Put her down!"

Quailpaw turned her head and, in the darkness, she spotted the massive figure of a white tom and his scent brought with it the unmistakable tang of rabbit and wind. This was Hareleap, a WindClan warrior.

Dread and fear trickled through the Siamese she-cat's body and she instinctively unsheathed her claws.

Laketuft was standing with his ears flattened against his head as he stared at Hareleap in horror. That was when Quailpaw noticed Hareleap was holding Voletail firmly in his grasp with her whimpering against the ground.

"Why should I?" Hareleap snarled, a wicked grin stretching across his maw.

"What's all of this about?" Sagestar emerged from his den and his yellow eyes lit up in rage and shock as he spotted the WindClan tom.

Before anything else could happen, another yowl from the camp entrance screeched out, "WINDCLAN, ATTACK!"

Quailpaw was immediately swept away in battle and was no longer able to see Hareleap or Voletail or Laketuft. She was tackled to the ground. The darkness of the night blinded her and she could hardly make out her opponent. All she knew was that it was a tom from his scent.

She slashed her claws in every direction and satisfaction surged through her veins as they caught into flesh. The tom hissed but her triumph was crushed as he slammed his paw across her muzzle. Burning pain scorched across her face and she yelped. She attempted to kick at his underbelly but he skillfully blocked her. As he moved his face closer to hers, she recognized the yellow pelt of Yarrowbranch. "Time to die, fish-face," he snarled quietly in her ear.

Die? Quailpaw thought in horror. Was WindClan really attacking with the intent to kill? That was against the warrior code! Quailpaw tried to wiggle away from Yarrowbranch but it was no use. He was bigger and stronger than her.

As if some miracle heard her silent pleas for help, Yarrowbranch was suddenly barreled over onto the ground. Troutpelt had been the one to do it. His lips were drawn back into a snarl, revealing his teeth. "Don't ever touch my apprentice again!" he hissed.

Yarrowbranch stood his ground but before he could do anything, Troutpelt lashed out with a forepaw and raked the WindClan tom across the muzzle. He yowled in pain and turned tail, fleeing back into the crowd.

"Are you okay?" Troutpelt panted. Quailpaw nodded. Still feeling a little shaken from being attacked, the Siamese told herself there was

more to come. She needed to toughen up. But then a jolt of fear stabbed through her belly. What if she met Turtlepaw in this battle? They'd be forced to fight or they'd be in trouble.

She swept her gaze across the fray of thrashing tails and paws, the sound of screeching the only thing filling her ears. Shock rippled through her body when she spotted Rabbitstar and Sagestar fighting with all their might against each other. From the looks of it, Rabbitstar was being more successful. She had the black leader pinned to the ground, her sharp claws digging into his shoulders. *Great StarClan, someone help him!* she thought in panic.

She was about to run over there and attempt it herself but she was knocked to the ground. She found herself coming face to face with a black and white apprentice. Realization hit her when she noticed this was Sweetpaw, Turtlepaw's sister.

"Sw-Sweetpaw, hey!" Quailpaw meowed out. But it was as if Sweetpaw couldn't hear her. She slashed her claws across Quailpaw's face, making her howl out in agony as hot, sticky blood dripped from the fresh wound. Rage bubbled in her chest and she struck out, digging her claws into Sweetpaw's shoulder. The WindClan apprentice hissed but didn't give up.

She slammed her paw down on Quailpaw's chest, causing her to yank her claws from her shoulder. Quailpaw winced as the strong forced pulled on her foreleg. Noticing that Sweetpaw didn't have her underbelly protected, she lashed out with her hind claws, kicking at the soft fur. Sweetpaw yowled and leapt off of Quailpaw.

They snarled in each other's faces, their ears flat to their heads, and their tails lashing to and fro behind them.

A screech of surprise and terror split across the clearing, causing Quailpaw and Sweetpaw to look away from each other. The entirety of the fighting cats seemed to freeze. A sudden pool of guilt flooded into Quailpaw's chest. What would Turtlepaw do when she found out Quailpaw had attacked her sister?

But she was quickly distracted from that when she spotted Cloverheart standing before Rabbitstar. "Y-you monster!" he choked

out. "What kind of leader are you? You've taken one of Sagestar's lives! Don't you know the warrior code forbids killing in battle unless absolutely necessary?"

Rabbitstar glared back unflinchingly, not a single trace of guilt in her amber eyes. "He'll come back!" she hissed.

Quailpaw shifted her gaze and instantly felt queasy as she saw Sagestar sprawled out on the grass, his blood pooling around him.

"They a-also got V-Voletail," the whimpering voice of Redwing sounded. Quailpaw gasped as the red tabby tom dragged the limp body of his mother into the moonlight. Every RiverClan cat yowled out in grief and anger.

Cloverheart flickered his green gaze back to Rabbitstar. "You call yourself a Clan? This is something *rogues* do." He took a threatening step closer to her, his teeth bared. "I suggest you get out of here. You've made StarClan as upset as you possibly could."

"StarClan agrees with me," Rabbitstar flashed back.

Cloverheart narrowed his eyes. "Then you must believe in a different StarClan, my friend."

Cloverheart turned back to Sagestar and Voletail, a mournful expression creeping into his eyes. Rabbitstar backed up a few paces and then jerked her head in a signal for her Clan to follow. Quailpaw was a little surprised that the WindClan leader had actually listened to Cloverheart but she wasn't going to complain. This had been a pointless battle and they'd lost two valuable lives.

The WindClan cats streamed out of the clearing. Rabbitstar was the last to leave and she raked her fire-colored gaze over each cat in sight. "You may have conquered WindClan today, you foolish RiverClan vermin, but we will be back. We will torment you until you feel the guilt of your crimes. Icepaw will avenged." Not waiting for a reply, she whipped around and stalked out of sight.

Quailpaw stared after her, feeling dread trickle through her body. Rubblepaw and Otterpaw came to stand beside her and she sighed

in relief. They were okay.

"That wound on your face looks bad," Otterpaw commented.

Quailpaw shrugged. "I'll let Thistleleaf look at it in a bit," she murmured.

She jerked her head back to Sagestar as soft groans came from his body. He shifted weakly in the grass and Thistleleaf immediately rushed over with herbs in her jaws. "Are you alright, Sagestar?" she whispered loud enough for everyone else to hear.

Sagestar lifted his head, his yellow gaze bleary. He didn't answer Thistleleaf and instead shakily got to his paws. He limped forward a few paces and blinked in surprise when he spotted Voletail lying on the ground, blood flowing from a wound on her neck. Redwing, Sleetfall, and Laketuft gathered around their mother's body, tears streaming down their faces.

Sagestar gazed at his Clan with shocked, mournful eyes. "E-Everyone, I'm so sorry all this happened," he meowed out sorrowfully. "Voletail's life will never be forgotten. I think it's only necessary we sit vigil for her the rest of the night."

Pikepaw moved forward, his golden gaze locked on his dead mentor. Quailpaw felt sympathy for him but didn't speak.

Creekfall and Hailclaw stepped forward, shame bright in their eyes. Quailpaw remembered they had been tonight's guards.

"We're so sorry, Sagestar," Creekfall choked out. "We tried to stop them but there was too many of them."

Sagestar flicked his tail. "Don't apologize," he meowed. "No cat can blame you for the actions of an entire Clan. You did your best and I'm satisfied with that."

Thistleleaf quickly prepared Voletail's body. She was settled in the middle of the camp, her brown tabby fur decorated with lavender petals. The chill of leafbare tugged at Quailpaw's fur, but as she huddled up with her Clanmates, it eased. Voletail's kits laid the closest to her and Quailpaw couldn't take her eyes from Redwing.

He was her friend and she would make sure to check up on him later and hopefully offer some support.

Quailpaw then moved her bright blue eyes to the sky. A flash of lightning raked across the thick, dark clouds but she could tell dawn wasn't too far off. The elders would bury Voletail soon and then they'd all take cover in their dens until the storm passed.

But Quailpaw still felt confused and lost. What had even happened tonight? *StarClan, why are you letting WindClan do this to us?*

Chapter 15

A moon had passed since WindClan attacked RiverClan. Redwing, Sleetfall, and Laketuft were still mourning over the loss of their mother and Quailpaw was growing more anxious as the days went by. She was very attached to Rubblepaw and Otterpaw, more than she usually was. Their presence was comforting and helped her keep her head up.

The last Gathering had been tense and had ended in ruffled pelts and anger. ShadowClan and ThunderClan still insisted on keeping their noses out of this conflict which in a way angered Quailpaw. Didn't they realize that two Clans at war was never a good sign? Quailpaw had never lived through any other major issues like this but she had been told stories. Usually the other Clans stepped in and helped. Why was it different now?

She had also spotted Turtlepaw at the Gathering and had tried to talk to her but any time she barely came a tail-length near a WindClan warrior, she was met with bared teeth and a threatening hiss. And so she had been unable to come into contact with her friend. This left Quailpaw feeling rather upset. She hadn't spoken to the black she-cat in such a long time.

Now the Siamese she-cat was sitting outside the apprentices' den, her fur fluffed up against the chill. Leafbare still had about two moons left before it was over and she was already craving the warmth of newleaf. Thankfully, though, this leafbare seemed to be doing okay. No cats were sick and prey was easy to find. Of course, RiverClan cats ate well no matter the season due to their love for fish.

Quailpaw lifted her head slightly as Sagestar made his way towards the Willow. He jumped up onto the lower branches and swept his golden gaze across the clearing. "Let all cats old enough to swim gather here for a Clan meeting!"

Cats streamed out of their dens and assembled around the tree's

base. Anxiety, curiosity, and interest lingered in the gazes and Quailpaw took a seat next to Eaglepaw. Her brother was frowning at the RiverClan leader.

Cloverheart placed himself among the roots of the Willow, his tail tucked over his forepaws and his green eyes blank and unreadable.

Sagestar cleared his throat before beginning the meeting. "Cats of RiverClan," he meowed, his voice echoing around the clearing. "It has been a moon since Rabbitstar launched an attack on us. I lost one of my lives and Voletail was killed." He paused, grief flashing in his eyes for a second before he pushed on. "WindClan has made it obvious they aren't going to give up this fight and they obviously want us to back into submission. Some of the senior warriors may call me naive for making this choice, but we are going to attack WindClan soon."

Meows of shock rippled through the clearing. Eeltail rose to his paws, his eyes gleaming with excitement. "That's a wonderful idea, Sagestar!" he called out.

Creekfall stepped up next, her head tilted to one side. "Are you sure?" she questioned. "Reacting will only feed the fire, not extinguish it."

Sagestar lifted his tail for silence. "Voletail will not die for nothing," he muttered darkly.